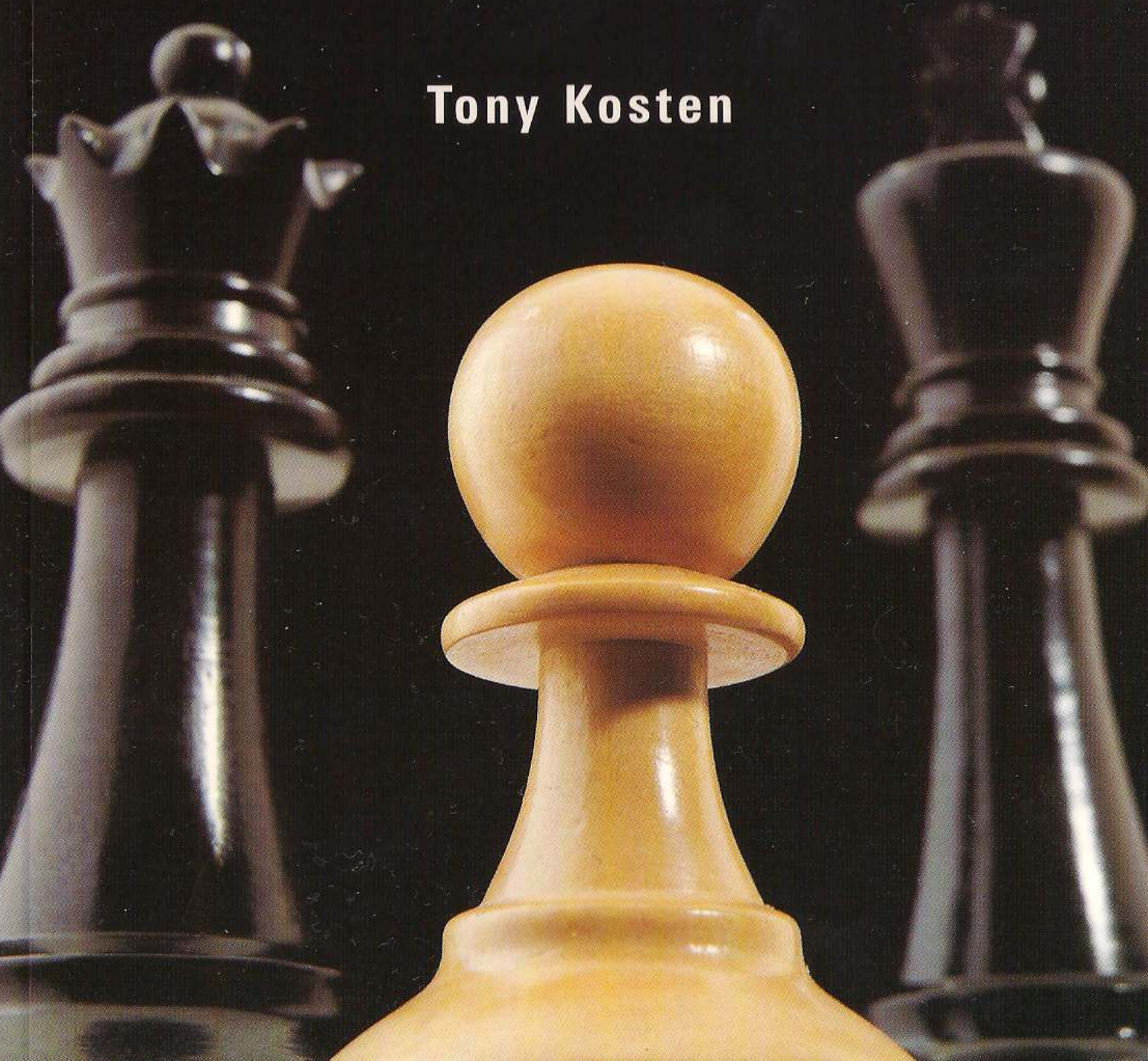
GAMBIT

The Dynamic English

The aggressive player's guide to a traditional chess opening

Tony Kosten



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Symbols and Abbreviations

+	check
++	double check
#	checkmate
x	capture
!!	brilliant move
!	good move
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
?	bad move
??	blunder
Ch	championship
Cht	team championship
Ech	European championship
Wch	world championship
ECC	European Clubs Cup
tt	team tournament
Ct	candidates event
IZ	interzonal event
Z	zonal event
OL	olympiad
jr	junior event
wom	women's event
mem	memorial event
rpd	rapidplay game
corr.	correspondence game
IQP	Isolated Queen's Pawn
KI	King's Indian
1-0	the game ends in a win for White
½-½	the game ends in a draw
0-1	the game ends in a win for Black
(*n*)	*n*th match game
(D)	see next diagram

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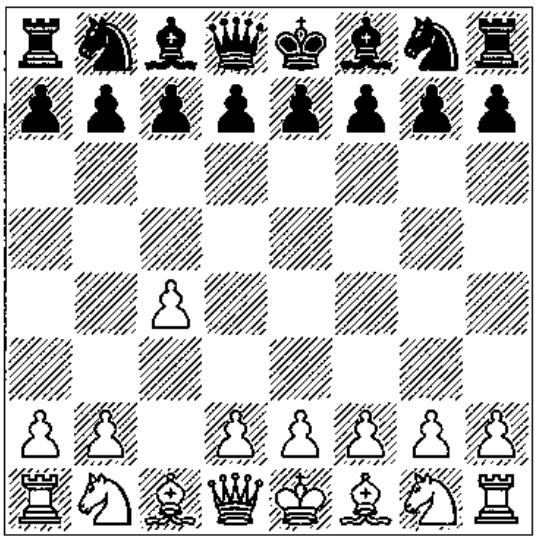
English 1...P-K4, John L. Watson (Batsford 1979)
Symmetrical English 1...c5, John L. Watson (Batsford 1988)

Electronic
I was ably assisted by ChessBase 7, with the Fritz 5 and Crafty 16 analysis modules. Recent games were drawn mainly from *The Week in Chess*, edited by Mark Crowther.

Introduction

The English Opening is so named because it was introduced, and played on a regular basis, by the English (unofficial) World Champion, Howard Staunton.

1 c4 *(D)*



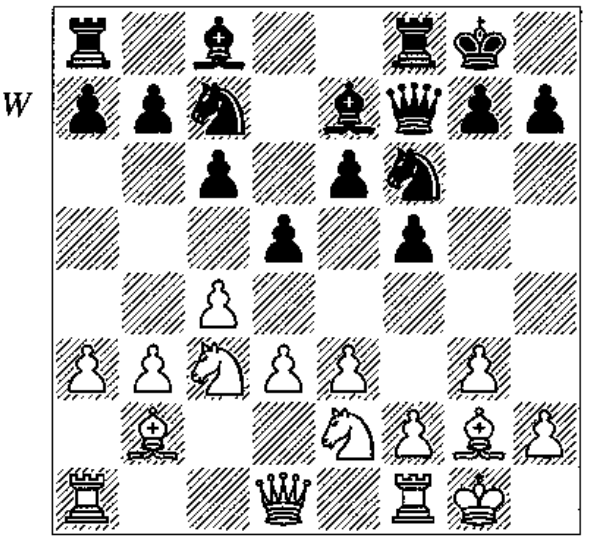
In fact, he played the opening in a surprisingly modern manner, as can be seen from the following game:

Staunton – Horwitz

London (7) 1851

1 c4 e6 2 ♘c3 f5 3 g3 ♘f6 4 ♗g2 c6 5 d3 ♘a6 6 a3 ♗e7 7 e3 0-0 8 ♘ge2 ♘c7 9 0-0 d5 10 b3 ♕e8 11 ♗b2 ♕f7 *(D)*

Against Black's Dutch set-up White has played a very flexible double fianchetto, developing his pieces exactly as many players do today.



12 ♖c1 ♗d7

He now produced the thematic e4 break, the classic rebuff to Black's light-squared scheme.

13 e4! fxe4 14 dxe4 ♖ad8 15 e5 ♘fe8 16 f4 dxc4 17 bxc4 ♗c5+ 18 ♔h1 ♗e3 19 ♖b1 g6 20 ♕b3 ♗c8 21 ♘e4 ♗b6 22 ♖bd1 ♘a6 23 ♕c3 ♖xd1 24 ♖xd1 ♘c5 25 ♘d6 ♕c7 26 ♕c2 ♘g7 27 g4 ♕e7 28 ♗d4 ♕c7 29 a4 ♘a6 30 c5 ♗a5 31 ♕b3 b6 32 ♘e4 bxc5 33 ♘f6+ ♔h8 34 ♕h3 ♘e8 35 ♗a1 ♘xf6 36 exf6 ♔g8 37 ♗e5 ♕b7 38 ♗e4 ♕f7 39 ♘g1 ♗d8 40 g5 ♗b7 41 ♘f3 ♖e8 42 ♗d6 ♗xf6 43 gxf6 ♕xf6 44 ♘g5 ♕g7 45 ♗e5 ♕e7 46 ♗xg6 1-0

Staunton was also fond of playing the same piece set-up with Black against 1 e4, although this, of course, is a Sicilian Defence.

The English Opening is now established as one of White's foremost openings. The theory is highly developed in some lines, and it has been played by most of the leading players, and all the recent World Champions.

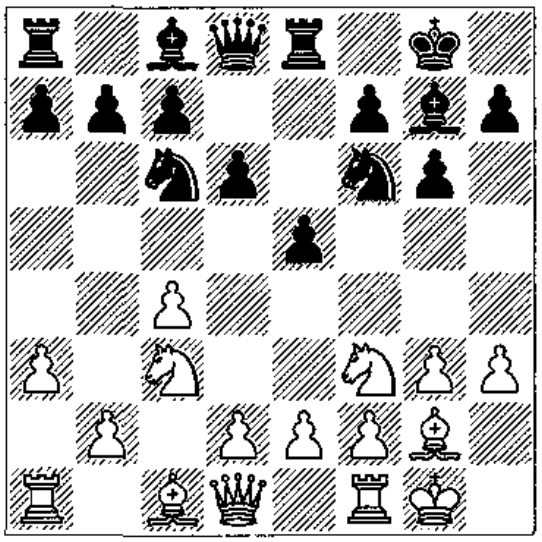
Why play the English?

Playing the English Opening it is possible to win games with White, by just adopting a piece set-up and subsequent plan with which you are familiar, sometimes regardless of your opponent's moves.

One major difference between so-called flank openings and, say, 1 e4, is the presence of enormous transpositional possibilities. The lack of contact between the two sides' forces in the first few moves of the English (and Réti) allows each player considerable leeway to develop his forces much as he pleases. Certain key positions can arise from twenty or more completely distinct move-orders! This can render the rote learning of variations rather futile, and a clever opponent can often bring about an advantageous position by skilful use of move-order.

How does he do this? First, it requires a thorough knowledge of typical positions and stratagems. For instance, in the following position, Black has just played ...♖e8, intending to play a move like ...♘d4 with various plans of action along the e-file.

Normally, White would play d3 in a position such as this, but Chernin, an



Chernin – Rossiter
London Lloyds Bank 1994

experienced 'English' player, played the bold **9 e4**. Although his king's knight is not best placed on f3 (in a pure Botvinnik system, as the set-up with pawns on c4 and e4 is known, this piece would be on e2, so as not to impede the f-pawn), the fact that the black rook is misplaced on e8 (f8 would be better, to support the black f-pawn in some lines) means that White has transposed into a favourable Botvinnik-style position. The game continued:

9...♘d4 10 d3 ♘xf3+ 11 ♕xf3 h6 12 ♕e2 c6 13 ♗e3 ♗e6 14 ♖ad1 d5 15 exd5 cxd5 16 d4! exd4 17 ♖xd4 ♘d7 18 ♕d2! ♘c5 19 cxd5!

At first glance, it seem that White loses the exchange, but, in fact, he has prepared a stunning queen sacrifice.

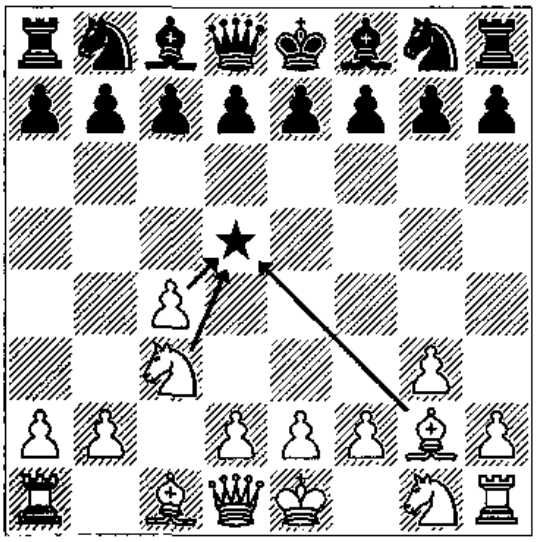
19...♘b3 20 dxe6!! ♘xd2 21 exf7+ ♔xf7 22 ♖xd2 ♕a5 23 ♗d5+ ♖e6 24 b4! ♕a6 25 ♘e4 ♗f8 26 ♗c5 ♗e7 27 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 28 ♘c5 ♕xa3 29 ♗xe6

♖d8 30 ♖e2 ♔f6 31 ♖e4 b6 32 ♖f4+ ♔g7 33 ♖f7+ ♔h8 34 ♘d7 1-0

Actually, this set-up of Botvinnik's features rather a lot in this book. It has served me well over the years, as it can be played against many lines. It features in Chapter 1 and, to a lesser extent, in Chapters 12 and 13.

What is White's basic idea?

For me, the English Opening is a fight for control of d5. White's first move, 1 c4, establishes contact with this square, and he follows up with ♘c3, and, normally, g3 and ♗g2, further strengthening his grip.



Therefore, in this book, it is no great surprise that I recommend the following approach: that White play 1 c4, 2 g3, 3 ♗g2 and 4 ♘c3, in this order, and then decide on his subsequent moves depending on Black's reply, and on the best piece formation he needs to adopt to counter Black's chosen set-up. In particular, White keeps his two most important pawns, the e- and d-pawns, on their original squares until he can decide with some certainty where they will be most effective. This is the way many top specialists in the English Opening start the game, and it is a very good one.

Strangely, this is also a quite 'untheoretical' approach. In my opinion, this is a big plus. Firstly, because your opponent will be unable to reel off his twenty moves of theory. Secondly (and I feel it is time to make a fairly frank confession at this point: I am a very lazy chess-player), it avoids having to keep up with all the latest developments in theory ourselves. Spending hours each day poring over the latest games and theoretical recommendations appears completely uninteresting to me. I still play openings that were last fashionable twenty years ago, if ever. I would rather avoid sharp Yugoslav Attacks against Sicilian Dragons and the like, and instead attempt to trick my opponent away from his 'home advantage' and on to my preferred terrain.

I myself continue to play the openings that I recommend in this book, with considerable success. For instance, whilst writing this book, I had to nip off to Germany for a match in the Bundesliga. Fortunately, for me, if not for my opponent, the opening was one that I had covered in Chapter 6, the Keres System, and I could simply

play the plan I had suggested, reaching a favourable position with an hour more on the clock.

Kosten – Mischustov
Bundesliga 1998/9

1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 c6 4 d4 ♗b4+ 5 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 6 ♕xd2 d6 7 ♘c3 0-0 8 e3 ♕e7 9 ♘ge2 ♘a6

Now, in Chapter 6, Line B, I recommend that White's best plan is h3 and g4, followed by ♘g3, intending a later ♘f5. So, without further ado, I did just this.

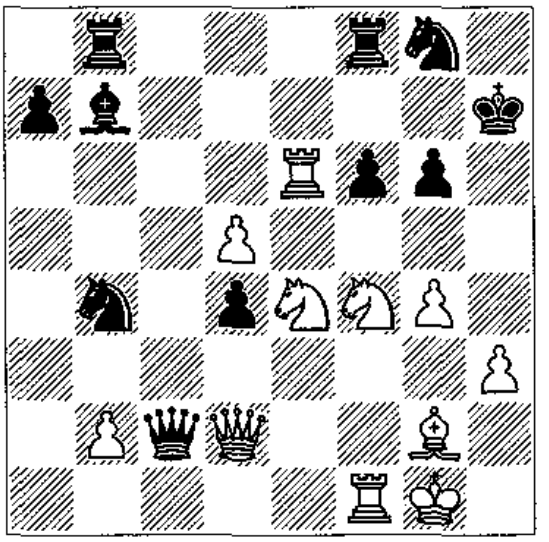
10 h3 ♖b8 11 g4 b5 12 cxb5 cxb5 13 ♘g3 b4 14 ♘ce2 g6

Black wants to play ...♗b7, but is worried about the f5-square, of course.

15 0-0 ♗b7 16 e4 ♔h8 17 f4 ♘g8

White's kingside forces and Black's dark-squared weakness suggests that an advance of White's kingside pawns should bear fruit.

18 f5 f6 19 a3! exd4 20 fxg6 hxg6 21 axb4 d5 22 ♘f4 ♔h7 23 exd5 ♘xb4 24 ♖ae1 ♕d6 25 ♖e6 ♕c5 26 ♘e4 ♕c2 *(D)*



Desperation, in time-trouble, but other moves were little better, e.g. **26...**♕c4 27 ♖c1 winning.

27 ♘xg6

Of course, 27 ♕xb4 ♗xd5 28 ♕xd4 ♗xe6 29 ♘xe6 wins immediately. I actually thought that 27 ♘xg6 was the 'flashiest' way of finishing the game, but there is the even 'flashier' move 27 ♖c1! and if 27...♕xd2 then 28 ♖c7+ ♔h6 29 g5+ fxg5 30 ♖xg6#. In my defence, the game was played at nine in the morning!

27...♔xg6 28 ♕g5+ ♔h7 29 ♖fxf6 ♖xf6 30 ♖e7+ ♘xe7 31 ♘xf6+ ♔h8 32 ♕h6+ 1-0

The organization of this book

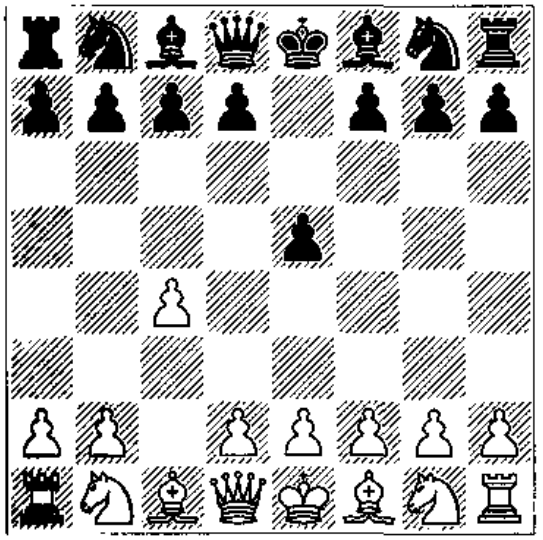
I have ordered the book in what seems to me to be the most logical way. Part 1 introduces 1...e5, Part 2 features 1...c5, and Part 3 deals with all the other possibilities. After the introductions to these sections, I have in each case devoted a chapter to each of Black's most important variations, and have recommended a line for White. I think that the recommendations are reasonably easy to play and that they should bring the reader plenty of winning positions. I have also pointed out good plans, where possible, so that the reader will (hopefully) know how to continue after the twelfth move, or when his opponent plays something unexpected.

Lastly, a warning: there are two major problems with a book of this sort. Firstly, attempting to deal with all the transpositional possibilities, as mentioned above, and secondly, dealing with the lines where Black attempts to play a non-English opening (like the Queen's Gambit Declined). In the first case, I have endeavoured to mention all the possible transpositions as they might occur, but I am well aware that some may have slipped through, and that opponents will inevitably find new and different ways of playing. I hope that there are sufficient indications in the text that will enable the reader to react in a sensible manner, and adopt an appropriate set-up. In the second, whilst writing the book, I was loathe to put, as many books do, that '...this is outside the scope of this work' or '...the reader is referred to' a specialist book on such-and-such opening, or, worse, to ignore the problem altogether. So, whereas I have indicated where White can transpose to another opening, if he likes playing that particular opening, or if it fits into the rest of his gamut of opening lines, I have also suggested a possible (sometimes 'non-English') line for White that fits in with the suggested repertoire.

Tony Kosten
Chamalières, France
February 1999

Part 1: Reversed Sicilian: 1...e5

1 c4 e5 *(D)*



It has often struck me as strange that so many players are happy to reply to 1 c4 with 1...e5 and yet are unwilling to play 1 e4 themselves. It appears very odd that they are happy to play the black side of a Reversed Sicilian and not the white side of a normal Sicilian, a whole tempo up. The fact that a lot of my opponents are 1 d4 players, and are hardly likely to want to play a Sicilian position, or, if they do, are rarely capable of playing them well, is a constant source of encouragement for me. Nevertheless, this is the single most important, and popular (if you include the transposition 1...♘f6 and 2...e5), reply to 1 c4 (it occurs about 20% of the time), and therefore it is essential that White has a good system prepared if he wishes to play the English with success.

2 g3

The 'normal' move in this position is 2 ♘c3, and after 2...♘f6 White plays 3 ♘f3 (or 3 g3), and following 3...♘c6 he can play 4 g3, which leads to two very important, and very theoretical, main lines after either 4...♗b4 or 4...d5. However, Black can also play the trendy 2...♗b4, or 2...♘c6 3 ♘f3 f5, or even the sharp 2...♘f6 3 ♘c3 e4!?, amongst many others.

I recommend the text-move, a completely logical move that fits in perfectly with White's aims: placement of the king's bishop on the h1-a8 diagonal, and control of d5. It is very popular amongst English specialists, as White can thereby avoid many of the fashionable lines, and keep a psychological plus.

Black has two main moves here:
A: 2...♘c6 (a 31% likelihood of occurring)
B: 2...♘f6 (a 42% likelihood of occurring)

The other moves are mostly dealt with in Chapter 7, 'Other Second Moves for Black': 2...c6 is Line A (though this is almost certainly going to transpose into the Keres System,

Chapter 6), 2...g6 is Line B, 2...f5 is Line C, 2...d5 is Line D, and 2...d6 Line E.

2...c5 is very rare, but will probably transpose to Chapter 8, Line C.

A)

2...♘c6 3 ♗g2 g6

Reinforcing Black's control over d4. Instead:

a) 3...♘f6 will transpose to Line B.

b) 3...f5 is covered in Chapter 2.

c) 3...d6 transposes to Chapter 7, Line E.

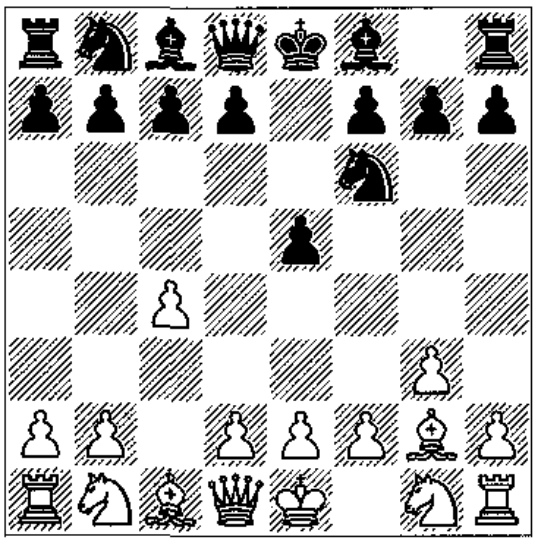
4 ♘c3 ♗g7 5 e4

We have reached Botvinnik's System, which is covered in Chapter 1.

B)

2...♘f6 3 ♗g2 *(D)*

B



3...♘c6

Common, but probably not very good. The best two moves are 3...d5, when 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 is a reversed Dragon, Chapter 5, and 3...c6, when 4 d4 leads to the Keres System, Chapter 6. Otherwise, 3...g6 will transpose to one of the variations of Chapter 13 after 4 ♘c3.

There are further possibilities:

a) 3...d6 4 ♘c3 when 4...g6 5 e4 will transpose to Chapter 1, should Black play ...♘c6, or Chapter 13, if not. On the other hand, 4...♘c6 is covered in the note to the next move.

b) 3...c5?! 4 ♘c3 will reach a version of Line C, or E, Chapter 8, where the f6-knight is misplaced – see the introductory example Kosten-Pira.

c) If instead 3...♗c5, then after 4 ♘c3, 4...♘c6 transposes into Chapter 3; else, if 4...0-0 5 e3 ♖e8 6 ♘ge2, White can either play a later a3, and once again transpose to Chapter 3, or avoid this altogether if he can thereby gain an advantage.

d) After 3...♗e7?!, 4 ♘c3 0-0 5 e4, aiming for a Botvinnik formation, would be a sensible reaction – Black's bishop is passively placed.

4 ♘c3 ♗b4

This is covered in Chapter 4. Otherwise:

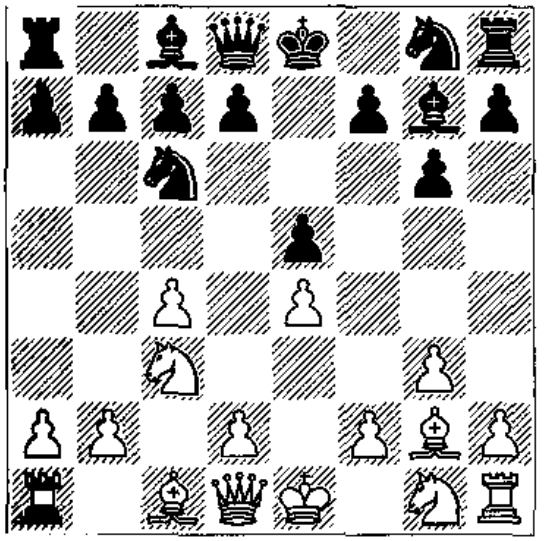
a) 4...♗c5 is Chapter 3.

b) 4...g6 leads to Chapter 1, Line F, following 5 e4 ♗g7 6 ♘ge2.

c) 4...d6 5 d3 and now 5...g6 6 e4 ♗g7 7 ♘ge2 also transposes to Chapter 1, Line F.

1 The Botvinnik System: 2...♘c6 and 3...g6

1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘c6 3 ♗g2 g6 4 ♘c3 ♗g7 5 e4 *(D)*



The introduction to White's plan. White can also play 5 d3 first, if he wants, and only commit himself on e4 later, but I think that 5 e4 is more accurate, as 5 d3 both deprives White of one of his most interesting possibilities (see Line F), and allows Black to play the promising line 5...d6 6 e4 h5 7 h4 ♘d4 8 ♘ce2 ♘e6, as in Chernin-Karpov, Tilburg 1992.

5...d6 6 ♘ge2

The king's knight goes to e2 rather than f3 for two main reasons: firstly, the f-pawn is now free to advance, and secondly, in the fight for control of d4, White sometimes needs to break a pin from Black's light-squared bishop by playing f3. There is a problem with this placement, however: knights are normally badly placed when defending each other like this, but the c3-knight will normally go to the fortified square d5 at some point. Still, the e2-knight can sometimes become a problem piece (much as Black's knight on e7) as the squares d4, f4 and g3 are denied it.

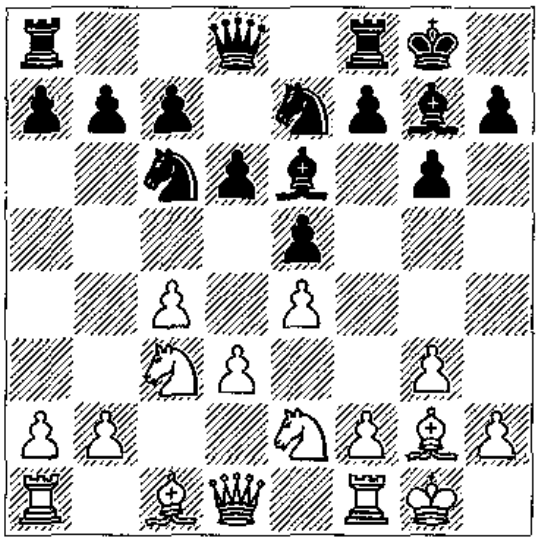
White's strategy

White takes a firm grip of d5, at the cost of weakening his control of d4. This strange-looking plan is based on Nimzowitsch's ideas, but was built into a system and popularized by Botvinnik. White will either try to force through the move d4, when he will enjoy a space advantage, or keep the centre closed and attack on the wing by f2-f4 or b2-b4-b5.

When to occupy the d5/d4 outpost

There is an interesting rule that is almost invariably applicable in these Botvinnik System positions, and it is that the knight should go to d5 (for

White; d4 for Black) only when the black queen's bishop moves to e6 (or for Black, when White plays ♗e3).



Here is a standard position in this line. Black has just played 8...♗e6, and White replies 9 ♘d5!. The knight is ideally placed here: c7 is attacked (which prevents Black from playing ...♕d7 and ...♗h3, exchanging light-squared bishops, for one thing), and also f6.

Why now? The reason is simple: the knight cannot be captured, as once Black has played ...♗e6, he cannot answer ♘d5 by eliminating the powerful knight, as ...♘xd5 would lose a piece to either pawn capturing on d5, and should Black take with his bishop then he relinquishes the bishop-pair.

This same idea applies to White, for if, in the same diagram, White fails to occupy d5, and instead plays the faulty 9 ♗e3?!, then Black must seize his chance and answer with 9...♘d4. It is now too late for White to play 10 ♘d5 as 10...c6 follows.

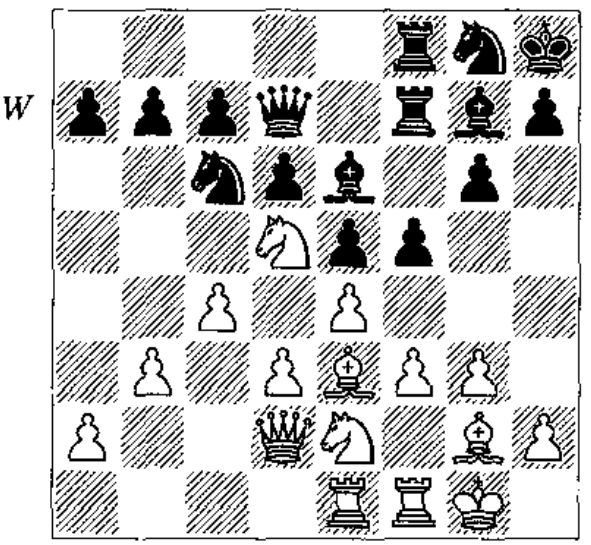
White's plan when Black plays ...f5

Black often plays an early ...f5; indeed, this occurs in the two most important lines by far, Lines A and B. White's key plan involves capturing on f5 at the correct moment. Notice that, although the white g2-bishop may appear stymied with the white pawn on e4, after White captures on f5, thus reopening the diagonal, it often becomes a strong piece.

When is 'the correct moment'? Normally, it is when Black is obliged to recapture on f5 with either a pawn, bishop, or rook, but not when he can recapture with the knight, as this will be well placed on f5, surveying d4.

Black recaptures with a piece

This is often the best way for Black to reply. White should follow up with the move d4, if he can. Consider the following example:



Smejkal – Yusupov
Bundesliga 1991/2

15 exf5 ♗xf5

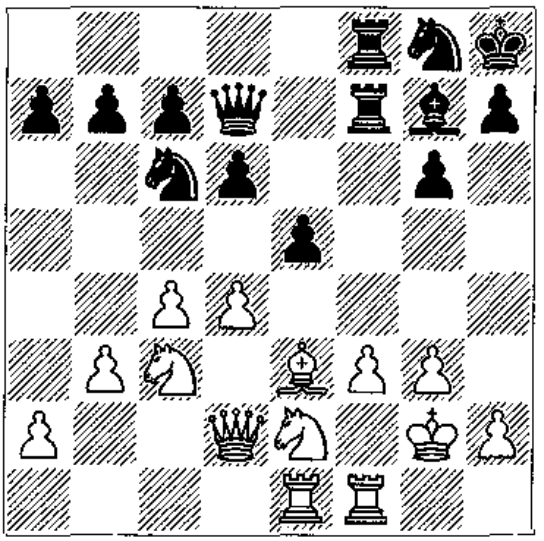
What can we say about the position that has arisen? Well, most importantly, Black no longer controls e4 with a pawn. If White can stop Black from playing a later ...d5, he will have obtained an excellent square for a knight. If he can also exchange Black's light-squared bishop, he will be well on the way to a 'good knight vs bad bishop' endgame.

16 d4 ♗h3

Not 16...♘f6?, when 17 ♘xf6 ♗xf6 18 d5 ♘e7 19 g4 wins a piece. The move g4 has positional echoes too, for by expelling the bishop from f5, White reinforces his hegemony over e4.

17 ♘dc3 ♗xg2 18 ♔xg2 *(D)*

B



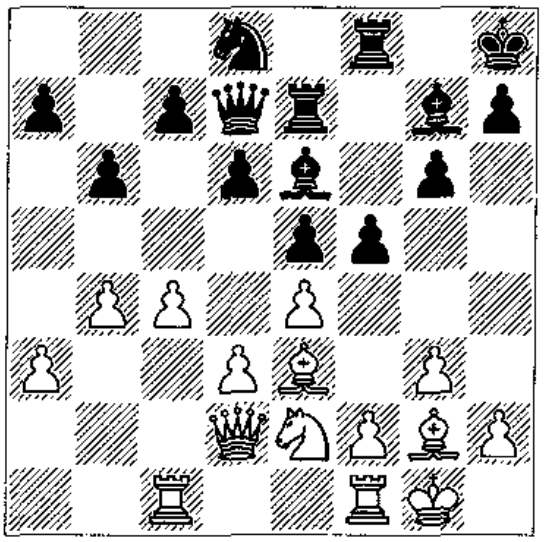
White is threatening to play d5 and ♘e4, when the black bishop on g7 would look ill, so Black is obliged to capture on d4.

18...exd4 19 ♘xd4 ♘ge7 20 ♗g1 ♘xd4 21 ♗xd4 ♘f5 22 ♗xg7+ ♘xg7 23 ♖e4

White has the advantage: he controls the e-file and his kingside pawn majority is mobile, whereas Black's queenside pawns are static.

A further example:

W



Spraggett – San Segundo
Palma de Mallorca GMA 1989

16 exf5 ♗xf5 17 d4 ♗h3 18 d5 ♘f7 19 f3 h5 20 ♘c3

The e4-square beckons. Black decides that capturing on g2 would be foolhardy, and so brings his bishop back to control e4.

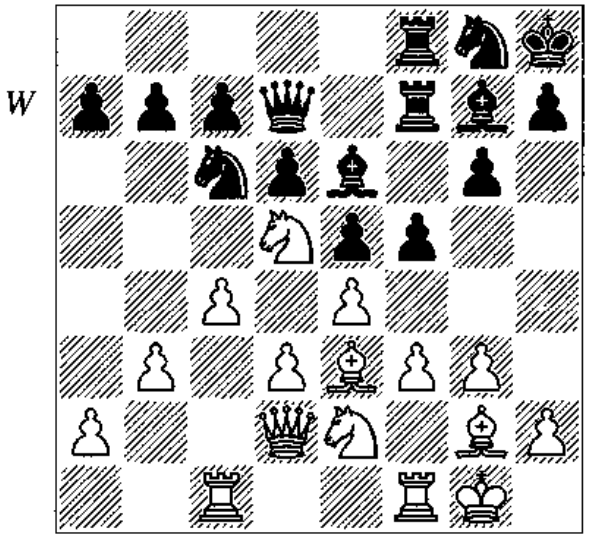
20...♗f5 21 c5

White has the better-placed pieces and a queenside attack.

Black recaptures with the g-pawn

White's first concern is to fix the f5-pawn where it is, as its future advance might become a problem, and even if not, who wants to have to analyse the possibility of ...f4 every move? So, White follows his capture on f5 with

the move f4, stopping the f5-pawn in its tracks.



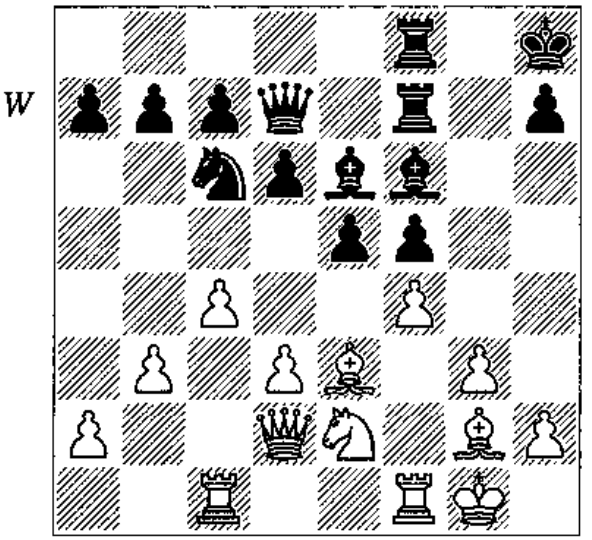
Csom – Gulko
Biel IZ 1976

Our preconditions for capturing on f5 are fulfilled here, as Black cannot recapture with his knight.

15 exf5 gxf5

Now the crucial blocking move:

16 f4! ♘f6 17 ♘xf6 ♗xf6 *(D)*



So far, so good. White is better and has a variety of possible follow-ups. In fact, he can now force a further deterioration of the black pawn-structure:

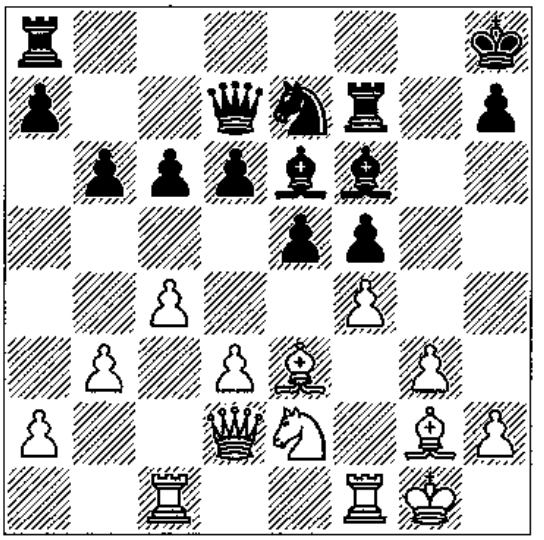
18 d4! exd4

If 18...e4?? then 19 d5 forks two pieces.

19 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 20 ♗xd4 b6 21 ♖fe1

White has the better pawn-structure, more space and safer king.

From a similar position, here are two other examples of White obtaining favourable changes in the pawn-structure.



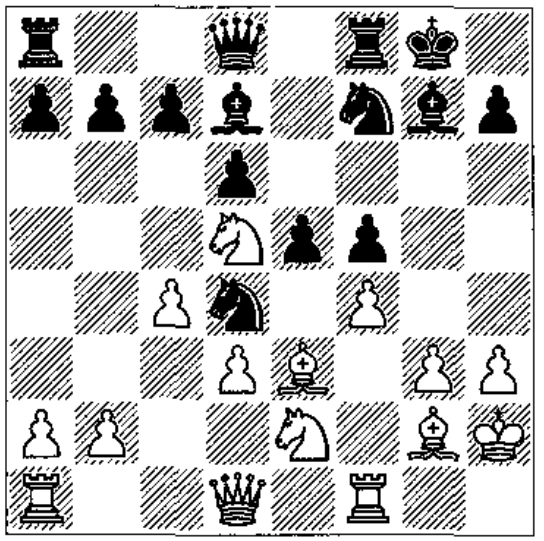
Balashov – Dvoirys
Cheliabinsk ECC 1991

18 fxe5 dxe5 19 d4 ♖d8 20 ♖cd1 ♘g6 21 dxe5

White has gained the f4-square and exposed the isolated f5-pawn.

21...♕xd2 22 ♖xd2 ♘xe5 23 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 24 ♘d4 ♗d7

Now White played **25 ♗h3**, winning the f-pawn.



Psakhis – Ragozin
London Lloyds Bank 1994

White sees a way of winning control of the f4-square:

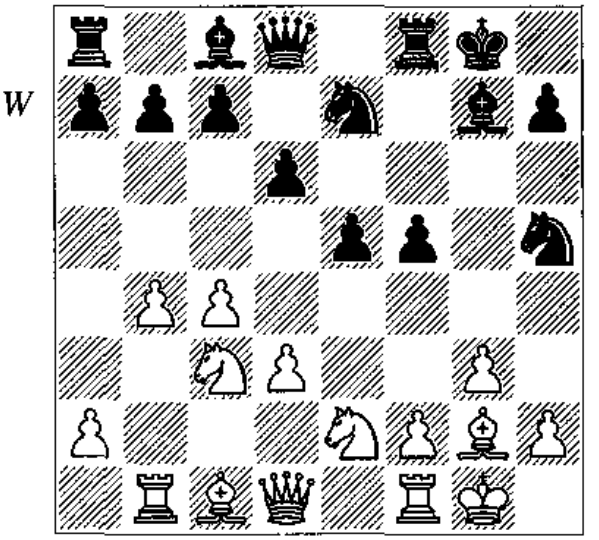
15 fxe5! dxe5 16 ♘xd4 exd4 17 ♗f4 ♗e5 18 ♕d2 c6 19 ♖ae1

White has a clear edge.

The Petrosian Pin

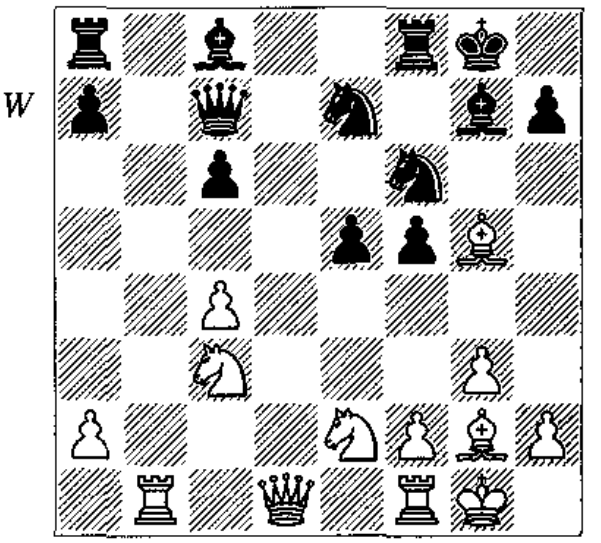
An idea that is peculiar to these positions is the pin ♗g5. This occurs quite a lot in the English Opening as it is a vital part of White's fight for control of the d5-square, but the intention is normally to capture a knight. Here, before White takes on f5, ♗g5 would meet the response ...h6, and if ♗h4??, Black would continue ...g5, trapping the ill-fated piece. However, after Black has played gxf5, this line is no longer possible, so that White can happily place his bishop on g5, and if ...h6, reply ♗h4, maintaining the irritating pin.

The following diagram is an interesting example:



Tiviakov – Gleizerov
St Petersburg Z 1993

White developed his last piece by **12 ♗g5** and after **12...♘f6** continued forcefully: **13 d4 c6 14 dxe5 dxe5 15 b5 ♕c7 16 bxc6 bxc6** *(D)* and now:

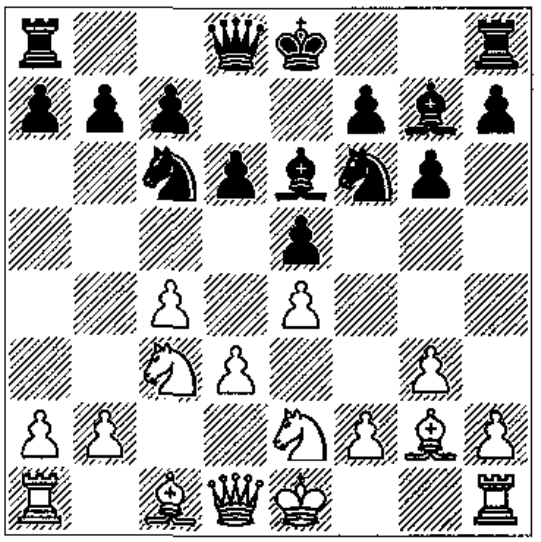


17 ♘b5! cxb5 18 ♗xa8, winning.

The ♗h6 tactic

If White plays ♘d5, and Black replies ...♕d7, White can sometimes play ♗h6, attempting to deflect the g7-bishop from its surveillance of f6.

W



Fluckiger – Herzog
Bern 1989

Black replied to White's move **8 ♘d5** with the blunder **8...♕d7?**, upon which White played **9 ♗h6! 0-0 10 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 11 ♗xf8** winning the exchange. Black had little choice, since 9...♗xh6?? allows 10 ♘xf6+, forking king, and queen, whilst 9...♘xd5? 10 ♗xg7 ♖g8 11 exd5 wins a piece.

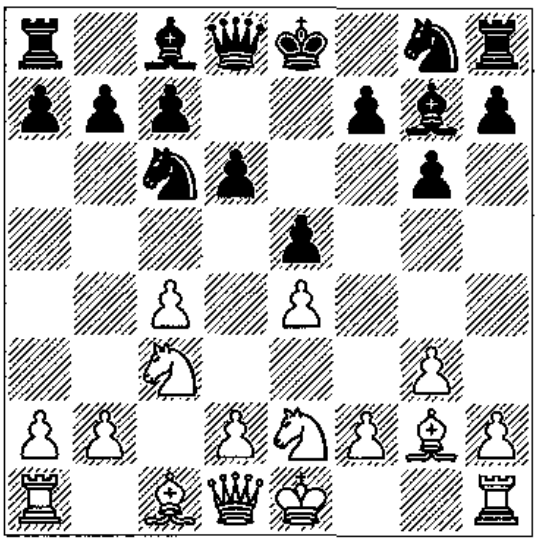
The Theory of the Botvinnik System

1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘c6 3 ♗g2 g6 4 ♘c3 ♗g7 5 e4 d6 6 ♘ge2 *(D)*

Black has a number of replies, of which Lines A and B are the most common:

A: 6...♘ge7	18
B: 6...f5	22
C: 6...♗e6	25
D: 6...♘d4	26
E: 6...h5!?	27
F: 6...♘f6	28

B



6...♘h6 will transpose to Line B after the likely 7 d3 0-0 8 h4 f5.

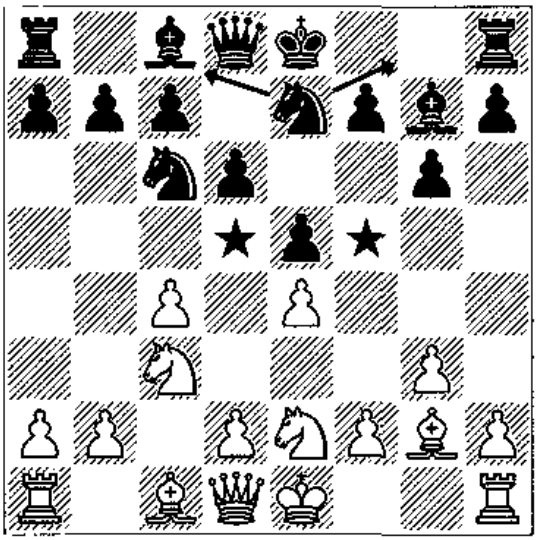
A)

6...♘ge7 *(D)*

Considered Black's best, and the main line, since Botvinnik used it himself to good effect. The advantage of this move is that the black f-pawn is free to advance, and that White will be well advised not capture on f5, as he often does in other lines, as here Black will be able to recapture with the knight (instead of the bishop or pawn, which are both disadvantageous) thereby controlling d4 and bringing the knight to a better square. The main drawback of this move is that the knight is misplaced for other purposes. If White refrains from capturing on f5 (which he should, and will) then the knight does little more than defend the c6-knight and get in the way on the e-file.

The inevitable outcome of this is that Black will eventually decide to re-deploy this piece, via c8 or g8, and then White will capture on f5.

W



7 d3 0-0

7...♗e6 8 ♘d5 0-0 9 0-0 transposes.

8 0-0 ♗e6

Others:

a) 8...♘d4 9 ♘xd4 exd4 10 ♘e2 c6 brings us to Line D.

b) 8...♗d7 looks a little passive, but has the merit of allowing 9 ♘d5 to be met by 9...♘xd5 10 cxd5 without losing a piece, e.g. 10...♘d4 11 ♘xd4 exd4 12 ♗f4 ♕e7. Moreover, Black can meet 9 ♗e3 by 9...♘d4. Even so, after 9 ♘d5, Botvinnik-Spassky, Leiden 1970 continued 9...♖b8 10 ♗g5 f6 11 ♗e3 f5 12 ♕d2 ♘xd5 13 cxd5 ♘d4 14 ♘xd4 exd4 15 ♗g5 ♕c8 16 ♖ac1, with the tiniest of pluses to White, who has some play down the c-file.

c) 8...♗g4?! just presents White with a free move, which will probably prove useful, after either 9 f3 ♗e6 10 ♘d5 f5 11 ♗e3 ♕d7 12 ♕d2 ♖ae8 13 ♖ae1 ♘c8 14 b3, Sunye-Kindermann, Dubai OL 1986, or 9 h3 ♗e6 10 ♘d5 ♕d7 11 ♔h2, Adamski-Vihinen, Copenhagen 1998. In both cases White has a pleasant position.

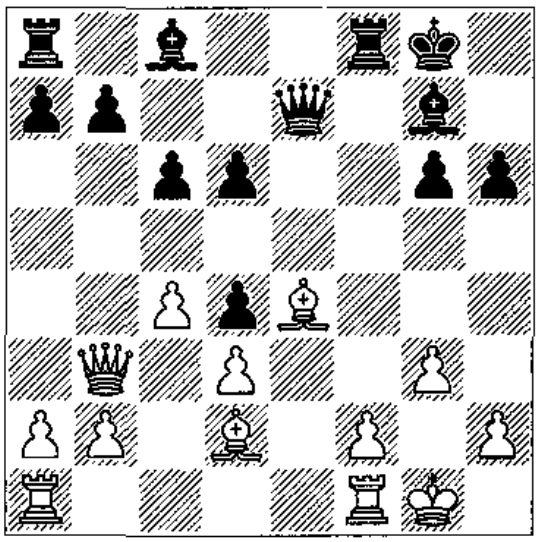
d) 8...f5 9 ♘d5 and here:

d1) 9...♗e6 10 ♗e3 ♕d7 obviously leads to the main variation.

d2) 9...fxe4?! is the kind of move seen in practical play; by exchanging on e4, Black relieves White of the problem of preparing the central pawn push, d4. There is no real pressure on the f-file, the e7-knight is still no better off, and by simply bringing his major pieces to the c- and d-files White gains a clear advantage: 10 dxe4 ♗g4 11 f3 ♗e6 12 ♗e3 ♕d7 13 ♕d2 ♖f7 14 ♖ad1 b6 15 b4 ♖af8, Benko-Evans, USA Ch (New York) 1966.

d3) 9...h6 does not appear to be overly useful. 10 ♗e3 ♘d4 11 ♘xd4 exd4 12 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 13 ♗d2 c6 14 ♕b3 fxe4 15 ♗xe4 *(D)*.

B



This is another position typical of lines where Black plays ...♘d4 at some point – White has an important free pawn on the kingside. 15...♔h7 16 ♖ae1 ♕f7 17 f4 ♗f5 18 ♗b4 ♕d7 19 ♗xf5 gxf5 20 ♕d1 c5 21 ♗d2 ♔g6 22 ♕f3 ♖ae8 23 b4, Serper-Harley,

Hastings Challengers 1989/90. White has a clear edge: safer king, and better minor piece.

d4) 9...♔h8?! is a waste of time, and never recovered from the game Botvinnik-Petrosian, Moscow 1966, in which 10 ♗e3 ♗e6 11 ♕d2 ♕d7 12 ♖ae1 ♖ae8 13 f4 exf4 14 ♘exf4 ♗g8 15 ♘xe7 ♘xe7 16 ♗h3 b5 17 b3 c5 18 d4 ♕c6 19 cxb5 ♕xb5 20 dxc5 dxc5 21 ♖c1 ♖d8 22 ♕e2 ♕xe2 23 ♘xe2 c4 24 bxc4 ♘c6 25 ♗g5 should have been winning for White.

d5) 9...♘xd5 10 cxd5 ♘e7 (the alternative 10...♘d4 11 ♘xd4 exd4 12 ♗d2 ♗d7 13 ♖c1 ♔h8 14 ♕b3 ♖b8 15 ♗a5 b6 16 ♗d2 leads to a small, but nagging, advantage for White, because of the c-file pressure, Bischoff-Pfretzschner, Bad Zwesten 1998) 11 d4! fxe4 12 dxe5 dxe5?! (12...♗xe5) 13 ♘c3 ♔h8 14 ♗g5! h6 15 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 16 ♘xe4 (obtaining a classic 'good knight on e4 versus restricted bishop on g7' position) 16...♗d7 17 ♕b3 ♖ab8 18 ♕e3 b6 19 ♖ac1 ♖bc8 20 ♖fd1 c6? 21 ♘d6! ♕xd6 22 dxc6 winning, Psakhis-Gaponenko, Groningen 1995.

9 ♘d5

Not 9 ♗e3 allowing the annoying 9...♘d4, of course.

9...♕d7

The alternative 9...f5 10 ♗e3 ♕d7 also leads to the main line.

10 ♗e3

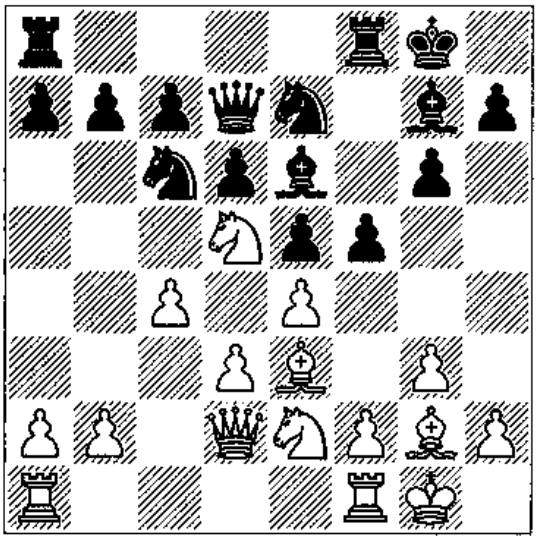
For those players who suffer problems with the clock, 10 ♗g5 is an idea, as after 10...f6 11 ♗e3, Black will be obliged to play ...f5 sooner, rather than later, and we reach the normal position (11...f5 12 ♕d2 ♖f7, etc.), with both sides having played a move more!

10...f5

This move is necessary as White was planning to advance his d-pawn, e.g. 10...♔h8?! 11 d4 ♘g8 12 ♘xc7! ♕xc7 13 d5 ♘d8 14 dxe6 ♘xe6 15 ♖c1 ♘e7 16 ♕d2 ♘c6 17 f4 ♘cd4 18 f5 ♘xe2+ 19 ♕xe2 ♘d4 20 ♕d2 with a large plus, Uhlmann-Adorjan, Arandjelovac 1976. The other attempt to hold back d4, 10...♘d4, also has its drawbacks: 11 ♘xd4 exd4 12 ♗h6 c5 13 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 14 ♕d2 ♘xd5 15 cxd5 ♗h3 16 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 17 f4 ♕d7 18 f5 f6 19 h4 ♕e7 20 ♖f3 when, despite the absence of minor pieces, White has a strong attack, Botvinnik-Geller, Moscow 1966.

11 ♕d2 *(D)*

B



White continues his development, defending b2 and keeping f4 well controlled.

11...♖f7

Botvinnik's move, doubling rooks in readiness for an eventual opening of the f-file.

11...♖ae8 looks sensible, but suffers from the drawback that only White can open the e-line. Note that, at present, there are six obstacles in the way of the e8-rook. As there is no need to play f3, because Black has less pressure along the f-file, White should move his queen's rook. 12 ♖ac1 (this seems the most appropriate square: as White would prefer not to open the e-file, it makes sense to advance on the queenside) 12...b6 (12...♖f7 13 b4 ♘c8 14 b5 ♘d8 15 exf5 ♗xf5 16 ♖fe1 ♗h3 17 ♗h1 c6 18 bxc6 bxc6 19 ♘dc3 c5 20 ♖b1 ♔h8 21 ♘e4 ♖ff8 22 ♘2c3 with a totally dominating position for White, who has wonderful squares for his knights, Ribli-Mokry, Moscow OL 1994) 13 b4 ♔h8 14 a3 ♘d8 15 ♘xe7 ♖xe7 16 exf5 ♗xf5 17 d4 ♗h3 18 d5 ♘f7 19 f3 h5 20 ♘c3 ♗f5 21 c5 ♔h7 22 a4 ♗h6 23 c6 and Black is being squeezed, Spraggett-San Segundo, Palma de Mallorca GMA 1989.

12 f3

I like this prophylactic move, which strengthens the centre and makes sure that Black should never be able to play the possible pawn sacrifice, ...f4.

12 d4!? is an interesting idea, aiming to play with a knight on e4 against the g7-bishop, and deserves more tests, e.g. 12...fxe4 13 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 14 d5 ♗h3 15 ♘c3 ♗xg2 16 ♔xg2 ♕g4 17 ♕c2 ♖af8 18 ♕xe4 ♕d7 19 ♕d3 ♘f5 20 ♘e4 which must be better for White, although he later lost in Koshi-Barcenilla, Asian Cht 1993.

12...♖af8

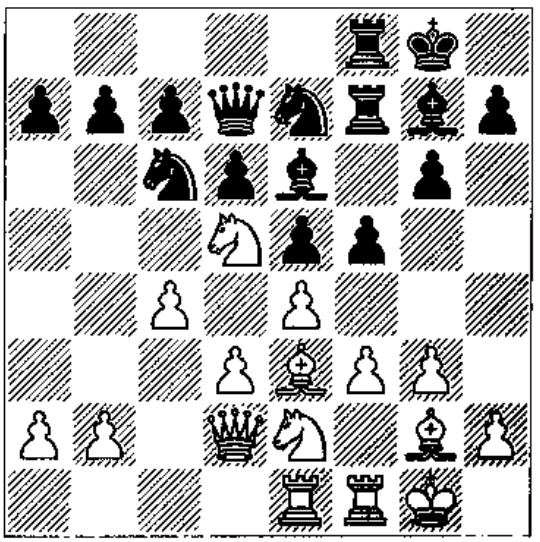
White would now like to play b3, but if played immediately this would allow ...f4, as the rook on a1 would be *en prise* following gxf4 exf4, so first White must move his queen's rook.

13 ♖ae1 *(D)*

Experience shows that the e-file is likely to be opened, so this rook is best placed here.

13 ♖ac1 is also good, for example 13...♔h8 14 b3 ♘g8 15 exf5 gxf5?! (this is a mistake; 15...♗xf5 is better, conceding the e4-square, but keeping the f-file open) 16 f4 ♘f6 17 ♘xf6 ♗xf6 18 d4 exd4 19 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 20 ♗xd4 b6 21 ♖fe1 ♖e8 22 ♗f3 ♖ff8 23 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 24 ♖e3 with advantage for White, Csom-Gulko, Biel IZ 1976. This is an instructive demonstration of White's tactics should Black mistakenly recapture on f5 with a pawn.

B



13...♔h8 14 b3 ♘g8

Black has run out of useful moves, and must now find a better square than e7 for his knight.

15 exf5!

Of course, this is the moment that White chooses to take on f5 – when the knight is no longer able to recapture.

15...♗xf5 16 d4 ♗h3 17 ♘dc3

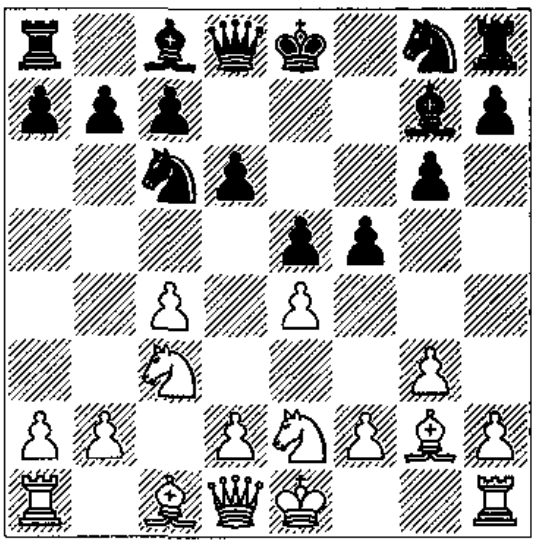
Threatening the positional sequence d5 followed by ♘e4.

17...♗xg2 18 ♔xg2 exd4 19 ♘xd4 ♘ge7

White has a small but enduring advantage, Smejkal-Yusupov, Bundesliga 1991/2.

B)

6...f5 *(D)*



A very important move, for the position after 7 d3 can arise from various other move-orders, in particular the 'Dutch' (1 c4 f5), and early ...f5 moves by Black (1 c4 e5 2 g3 f5 for instance).

7 d3 ♘f6

The most active move, but not without its disadvantages, for if White captures on f5, Black will now have the choice of retaking with the bishop, and conceding pawn control of e4, or recapturing with the g-pawn, and loosening his pawn-structure. Black can play 7...♘ge7, of course, which returns to Line A, whilst if he tries to get the best of both worlds by 7...♘h6, he runs into 8 h4! intending h5 and to open the h-file when convenient. This is a thematic method of exploiting a knight on the edge of the board like this. Black can reply:

a) 8...0-0 9 ♗g5 ♕d7 (9...♕e8 10 ♘d5 ♕f7 transposes to the next bracket) 10 ♘d5 ♘f7 (the disadvantage of 10...♕f7 is that the problem of the h6-knight's awkward placing still requires solving: 11 f3 ♔h8 12 ♕d2 ♘g8 13 ♗e3 ♗e6 14 0-0-0 intending h5, opening the h-file, Soffer-Manor, Tel-Aviv 1991) 11 ♗f6!? (11 ♗e3 also led to a strong position for White after 11...♘cd8 12 h5 c6 13 hxg6 hxg6 14 ♘dc3 ♘e6 15 exf5 gxf5 16 ♕d2 in the game Chernin-Kupreichik, USSR Ch 1985) 11...♘fd8 12 ♗xg7 ♕xg7 13 ♕d2 ♘e6 14 h5! ♘cd4 (14...f4!? also permits White a powerful attack, after the piece sacrifice 15 gxf4 exf4 16 hxg6 f3 17 gxh7+ ♔h8 18 ♗xf3 ♖xf3 19 0-0-0) 15 hxg6 hxg6 16 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 17 ♖h6! g5 18 ♖g6! ♕xg6 19 ♘e7+ winning the black queen, Serper-Ehlvest, Novosibirsk 1993.

b) 8...♘f7 9 h5 g5 10 exf5 ♗xf5 11 ♗d5 h6 12 ♗e3 leaves Black weak on the light squares, Portisch-Sax, Tilburg 1979.

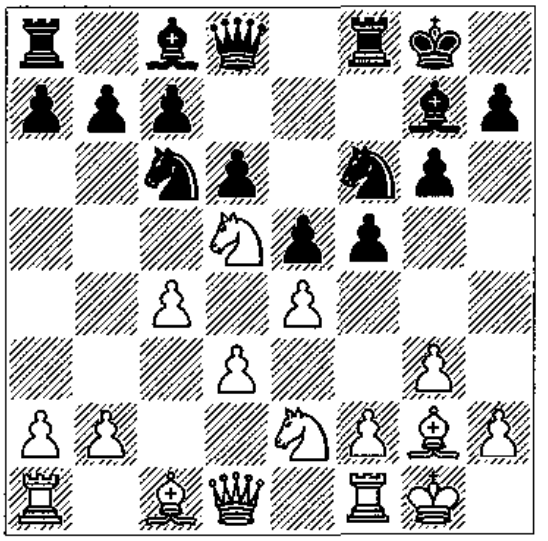
c) 8...♗e6 9 ♘d5 ♘f7 10 ♗e3 ♕d7 11 h5 gxh5 12 ♖xh5 fxe4 13 ♗xe4 and the white pieces dominate the board, Adorjan-Ribli, Budapest 1979.

d) 8...fxe4!? is a better try. Black hopes to secure the more active f5-square for his king's knight. 9 ♗g5 ♕d7 10 ♗xe4 (10 ♘xe4 has its points: White intends ♕d2, h5, and 0-0-0, but keeps f2 well defended) 10...♘f5 11 ♘d5 h6 12 ♗d2 is unclear, Psakhis-Svidler, Haifa 1995.

8 0-0 0-0

Once again, 8...fxe4?! leads to a structure that must be better for White: 9 dxe4 0-0 10 f3!? (10 ♖b1 a5 11 b3 ♗e6 12 ♘d5, Borek-Osorio, Elista OL 1998, seems more to the point) 10...♘d7 11 ♗h3!? (White wishes to exchange the light-squared bishop, but I would prefer keeping more pieces on the board, to exploit the space advantage; besides, Black might waste time to effect this exchange himself) 11...♘c5 12 ♗xc8 ♕xc8 13 ♗e3 ♘e6 14 ♔g2 ♖f7 15 ♕d2 and White enjoys a slightly superiority, Spraggett-Bhend, San Bernardino 1992.

9 ♘d5 *(D)*


B

The immediate 9 exf5 is possible, and leads to the type of position that White is aiming for. However, the text-move attempts to extract the utmost from the position, as White plans to take on f5 when it is more advantageous.

9...♗e6

The most natural move; alternatively:

a) 9...h6 (this prevents the pinning move ♗g5, but does nothing to improve Black's prospects) 10 h3 ♘e7 (after 10...♔h8 11 ♗e3 a5 12 ♕d2 g5 13 exf5 ♗xf5 14 g4 ♗g6 15 ♘g3 White takes a firm grip on the light squares, Svensson-Bjerke, Oslo 1992) 11 ♗e3 (11 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 12 exf5 is also a good plan, e.g. 12...♗xf5 13 g4 ♗c8 14 ♗e3) 11...c6 12 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 13 ♕d2 ♔h7 and now, instead of 14 f4, Bern-Djurhuus, Gausdal 1992, 14 d4 appears strong, as in the Serper game, in note 'd' below.

b) 9...♘d7?! is another, even more radical, way of avoiding the pin (by ♗g5), but is much too ambitious: 10 exf5 ♖xf5 11 h4! ♘c5 12 ♗g5 ♕d7 13 b4! h6 14 ♗e3 ♘e6 15 ♗e4 and Black is already lost, Makarychev-Kupreichik, USSR Ch 1979.

c) 9...♘h5 (this threatens ...f4, but leaves the knight offside) 10 exf5 ♗xf5 (10...gxf5 11 ♘ec3 ♘f6 12 ♗g5) 11 h3 (visibly, White is threatening to win a piece, but the real point of g4 is to claim the light squares) 11...♗e6 12

g4! ♘f6 13 ♗g5 ♘e7 14 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 15 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 16 b3 c6 17 d4 ♕c7 18 ♕d2 ♖af8 19 ♖ae1 e4?! (Black has serious problems; 19...exd4 20 ♘xd4 forces 20...♗c8, when 21 ♖e2 and doubling rooks on the e-file leaves the e7-knight, bereft of squares, in trouble) 20 d5! cxd5 21 ♘c3 ♕c5 22 cxd5 ♗xd5 23 ♗xe4 winning quickly, Makarychev-Svidler, Oviedo rpd 1992.

d) 9...♘e7?! (Black avoids committing the c8-bishop, but this is not the best square for the queen's knight, by any means) 10 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 11 d4! (this is a very logical reaction now that Black's hold on the centre is diminished) 11...c6 12 dxe5 ♗xe5 13 ♗h6 ♖e8 14 ♘d4 fxe4 15 ♗xe4 (White is structurally superior, with active minor pieces and use of the open central files; Black now decides to attempt to liquidate his backward d-pawn, but finds himself in big trouble) 15...d5 16 cxd5 ♘xd5 17 ♖e1 ♘f6 18 ♕b3+ ♔h8 19 ♘f3 ♗e6 20 ♕xb7 ♖e7 21 ♕xc6 ♘xe4 22 ♖ad1 ♕e8 23 ♘xe5 1-0 Serper-Ludwikow, Gausdal 1991.

e) 9...♘g4?! 10 exf5 gxf5 11 h3 ♘h6 12 f4 ♘f7 13 ♔h2 ♗d7 14 ♗e3 ♘d4 15 fxe5 dxe5 16 ♘xd4 exd4 17 ♗f4, with a clear advantage to White, as f4 and f5 are weak, Psakhis-Ragozin, London Lloyds Bank 1994.

10 ♗g5 ♕d7 11 ♕d2 ♘h5

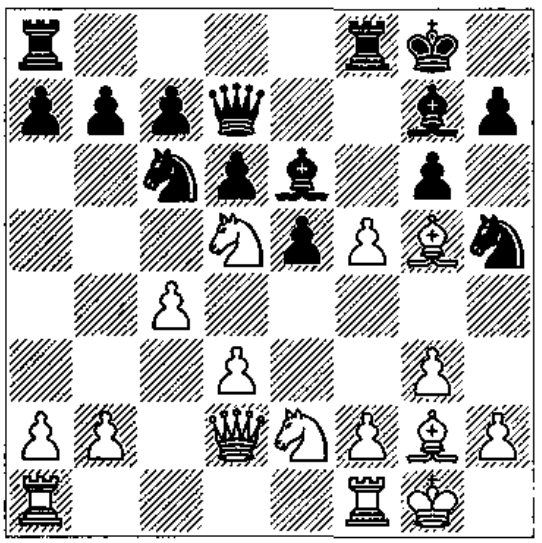
The most aggressive possibility: having unpinned the knight, Black tries to force through ...f4.

11...♖ab8?! is slow, and in Ljubojević-Meulders, Brussels 1987, White decided that the appropriate response would be to attack on the queenside by 12 ♖ac1 b6 13 b4, and this bore fruit after 13...♘d4? as 14 ♘xd4 exd4 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 exf5 ♗xf5 17 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 18 ♕f4 won a pawn for nothing.

11...♖f7 is reminiscent of Line A, and in Liberzon-Smyslov, USSR 1967 White decided to treat it in a similar manner: 12 ♖ae1 ♖af8 13 f3 ♘e8 14 ♗e3 with a plus.

12 exf5 *(D)*

B



Clearly, now is the time for this move, before Black plays ...f4 and gets his attack going.

12...♗xf5

Naturally, with the black queen on d7, White cannot play the h3 and g4 plan that was so effective in some lines, and so must find another method of playing.

12...gxf5 is more to White's taste. After 13 f4 ♔h8 14 ♖ae1 ♖ae8, 15 b4 ♘d8 16 ♘e3 ♘f7 17 ♗h4 left White for preference in Serper-Sakaev, USSR jr Ch (Kherson) 1991, but the sly 15

♕d1! might be better, creating veiled threats against the active h5-knight, for example 15...♘f6 16 ♘xf6 ♗xf6 17 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 18 ♕a4, pressuring Black's ragged pawn-structure.

13 b4

This is more precise than 13 ♖ae1, which allows Black time for 13...♖f7 when he defends c7, and can envisage playing ...♗h3, exchanging White's strong g2-bishop. Even so, in the game Ribli-Ibragimov, Homorod 1993, following 14 b4 ♗h3, instead of 15 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 16 b5 which soon led to a draw, 15 b5 would have maintained a pull.

13...♔h8 14 b5 ♘d8 15 a4

White continues his queenside action, but I prefer 15 ♗e3, as now the active move 15...♘e6? loses a piece to 16 h3.

15...c6 16 bxc6 bxc6 17 ♘dc3 ♘e6 18 ♗e3 ♘f6 19 f3 ♘c5

Ribli-Van Mil, Slough ECC 1997. Now 20 ♗xc5!? dxc5 21 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 22 ♕e3 seems promising.

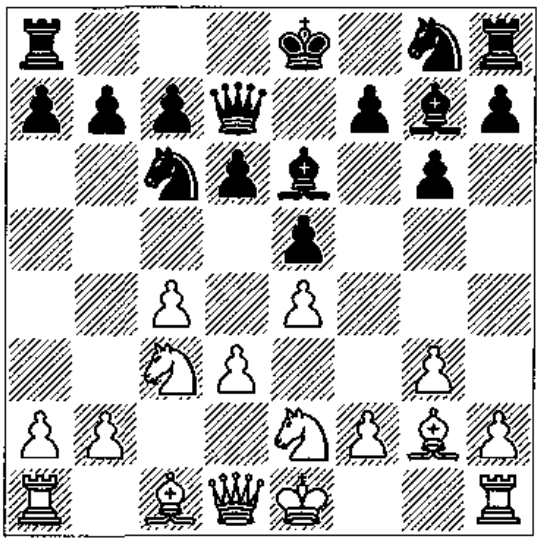
C)

6...♗e6 7 d3 ♕d7 *(D)*

7...♘ge7 will transpose to Line A.

8 ♘d5!

This is White's most accurate move here, played according to the principle stated at the beginning of this chapter (as the black bishop is on e6), and it also puts paid to any ideas Black might harbour of playing ...♗h3, followed by ...h5 and ...0-0-0, as c7 is *en prise*.



8...♘ce7

Or:

a) The other way of ejecting the white knight, 8...♘d8, can be met by 9 d4 c6 10 ♘e3 ♗h3 with similar play, but 9 f4 seems more to the point, as the knight on d8 does not control d5 or f5, e.g. 9...c6 10 ♘e3 ♗h3 11 0-0 ♗xg2 12 ♔xg2 ♘e6 13 f5 ♘d4 14 g4 ♘f6 15 g5 ♘h5 16 f6 ♗f8 17 ♘xd4 exd4 18 ♘g4 0-0-0 19 ♕f3 d5 20 cxd5 cxd5 21 ♗f4 ♗d6 22 ♖ac1+ ♔b8 23 e5, which led to a convincing victory for White in Korchnoi-Yusupov, Frankfurt 1998.

b) 8...f5 9 0-0 ♘f6 10 ♗g5 0-0 11 ♕d2 transposes to Line B.

9 d4 c6 10 ♘e3

For those players happy with a small edge in the endgame, 10 ♘xe7 ♘xe7 11 d5 might appeal, as after 11...cxd5 12 cxd5 ♗h3, White can play 13 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 14 ♕a4+ ♕d7 15 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 16 ♗e3 f5 17 f3 with the better minor pieces, and greater space, Portisch-Gheorghiu, Nice OL 1974.

10...♗h3 11 0-0 ♗xg2 12 ♔xg2 exd4 13 ♘xd4 h5!?

More combative than 13...♘f6 14 f3 0-0 15 ♕d3, when White enjoys a spatial plus, and eventual pressure against the d6-pawn.

14 a4?!

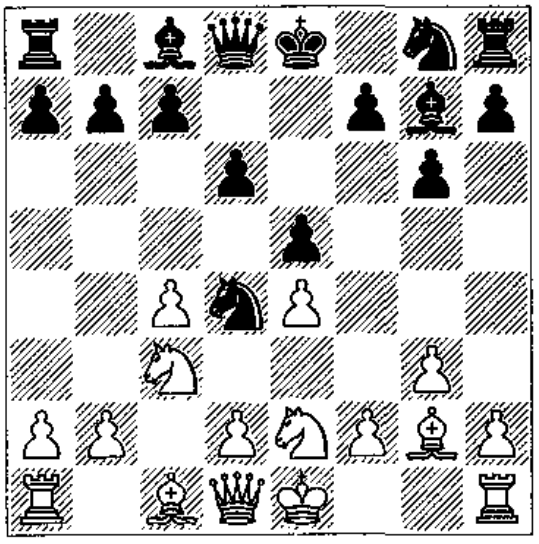
White wants to develop his queen's rook without moving his bishop, but Kasparov prefers 14 ♘f3 f5 15 exf5 gxf5 16 ♔g1 f4 17 ♘g2 fxg3 18 fxg3 with a small edge.

14...♘h6! 15 ♖a3 0-0-0 16 a5! h4 17 a6 b6 18 ♘f3 hxg3 19 fxg3 f6!? 20 c5!

Kasparov-Short, Linares 1990. White's last move was the introduction to a sharp queenside attack.

D)

6...♘d4 *(D)*



W

I have never quite understood this move since, instead of having a square on d4 for his pieces, Black prefers a doubled pawn. Still, it must have some redeeming virtues as it has been played against me more than once by good players, and Kasparov himself has played the same idea a move later.

7 ♘xd4

The best move, but if you find yourself in a similar position to that arising after the move 7 d3, then there is no need to worry about the pin 7...♗g4, as White has the strong reply 8 h3. Then 8...♘f3+?? 9 ♔f1 wins a piece, while 8...♗f3 9 ♗xf3 ♘xf3+ 10 ♔f1 and 11 ♔g2 gives White the advantage, as Black has wasted many moves swapping off his 'good' bishop for White's 'bad' bishop.

7...exd4 8 ♘e2 ♘e7 9 d3

Keene describes the d4-pawn as a 'dead point' in the centre, which does not sound too good for Black, but the main problem for Black is that he has freed the white kingside pawns, which can now advance with less hindrance.

9...0-0 10 0-0 c6

Black desists from playing ...c5, which weakens the d5-square, and prepares to defend d4 with his queen on b6.

11 h3

White is in no rush and strengthens his position. A good plan for White here is to deflect the d6-pawn so that the e- and f-pawns can advance. To this end he can play b4 and then c5 after suitable preparation, e.g. 11 ♗g5 h6 12 ♗d2 ♔h7 13 ♕c2 a6 14 ♖ae1 ♖a7 15 b4 b6 16 c5 dxc5 17 bxc5 b5 18 ♗f4 intending ♗d6, followed by f4 and the advance of the e- and f-pawns, Bischoff-Bern, Haifa Echt 1989, or 11

♗d2 h6 12 b4 immediately, as in Winants-Nijboer, Wijk aan Zee 1991.

11...♗e6 12 b3 f5 13 ♗b2 ♕b6 14 ♖b1 g5 15 exf5 ♗xf5 16 g4! ♗g6 17 f4 gxf4 18 ♘xf4

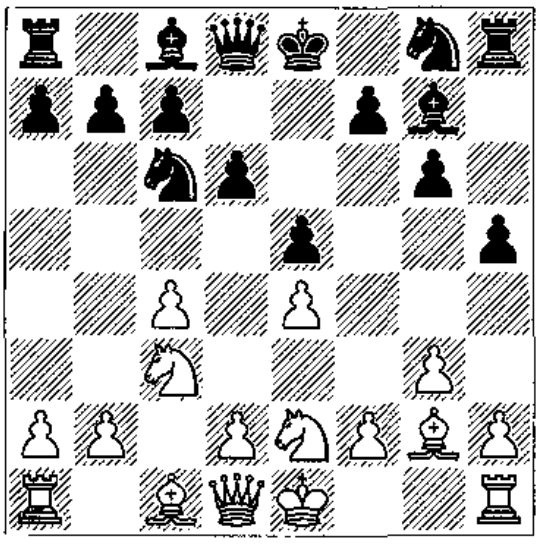
Black has played actively, but it has simply resulted in White mobilizing his kingside majority more quickly.

18...♗e5 19 ♗c1 ♖f6 20 ♖b2 ♖af8 21 ♖bf2 ♕a5 22 a3 ♖8f7 23 h4 ♗xf4 24 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 25 ♗xf4

Chernin-Akopian, Kazan ECC 1997. White is threatening h5, with a clear advantage.

E)

6...h5!? *(D)*



This move is favoured by some aggressive players. Black exploits the temporary closure of the centre to attack on the wing, and, concretely, threatens ...h4, hoping to induce a kingside weakness. However, the other side of the coin is that Black weakens his own kingside, in particular the g5-square.

7 h4

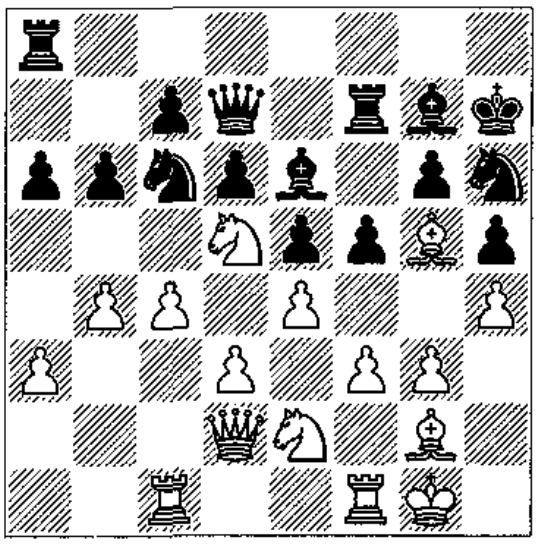
This loosens White's kingside, but the 'flexible' 7 h3 is dubious, as after 7...h4 8 g4?! ♗h6 White is well on the way to ending up with a bad bishop. White does not want to place too many of his pawns on light squares, at least not unless he can exchange the king's bishop.

7...♘h6

The most logical, keeping an eye on g4, and ready to help defend the g5-square from f7, if necessary. Black's main problem is that he wants to obtain kingside play, and so normally plays ...f5 at some point, but this gives White the g5-square 'on a plate'. White can exploit this directly, by playing ♗g5, or by manoeuvring a knight there, by ♘e2-g1-h3-g5, for example.

Alternatively, 7...♗e6 8 d3 ♕d7 9 ♗e3 (9 ♘d5 might be more accurate) 9...♘h6, de la Villa-Todorčević, Salamanca 1990, is similar, but, on the other hand, 7...♗g4 seems pointless, as White often plays f3 anyway, to control g4, and now he just gains a free move, viz. 8 f3 ♗e6 9 d3 a6? (obviously Black is intending ...♖b8 and ...b5, with play on the queenside, but it never gets going; 9...♕d7 is more logical, when Spraggett-Urday, Elista OL 1998 continued 10 ♘d5 f5 11 ♗g5 ♘d8 12 exf5!? ♗xf5 13 ♕d2 ♘e6 14 ♗e3, with an edge for White) 10 0-0 ♘h6 11 ♘d5 0-0 12 ♗e3 f5 13 ♕d2 ♔h7 14 ♖ac1 ♖f7 15 b4 ♕d7 16 ♗g5!? b6 17 a3 *(D)*.

B



This is the type of position White is aiming for, with well-placed pieces on g5 and d5, and possibilities all over the board. 17...a5? (this blunder allows consecutive blows on the queenside, centre, and kingside) 18 b5 ♘d8 19 exf5! ♗xf5 20 g4! hxg4 21 fxg4 ♘xg4 22 ♘xb6 cxb6 23 ♗xa8 and White has won an exchange, Seirawan-Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 1992.

8 d3 ♗e6

If 8...0-0 then 9 0-0 might be the simplest, with a likely transposition, rather than 9 ♘d5 ♘e7 10 0-0 c6 11 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 12 ♗xh6 ♗g7 13 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 14 d4 c5, Smejkal-Plachetka, Czechoslovak Cht 1992, which is fairly level.

9 ♘d5 0-0 10 0-0

Portisch-Gulko, Biel IZ 1976 featured an interesting plan: 10 f3 ♔h7 11 ♗e3 f5 12 ♕d2 ♕d7 13 ♖c1 ♘e7 and now, to exploit the g5-square, as I mentioned in the introduction to this section, White played 14 ♘g1! c6 15 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 16 ♘h3, with a small plus.

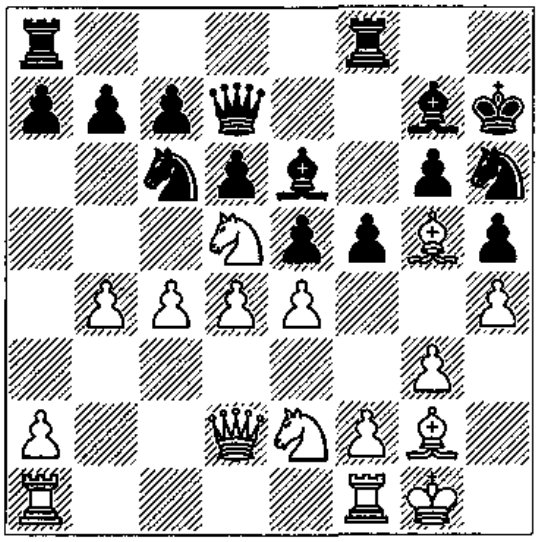
10...f5 11 ♗g5 ♕d7 12 ♕d2 ♔h7 13 b4 ♘d8

Temporarily relinquishing control of d4, so White's next move is the logical retort.

14 d4! ♘c6?! *(D)*

An error. 14...c6 would have been more reasonable.

W



White now plays very powerfully.

15 ♘f6+! ♗xf6 16 ♗xh6

The point, threatening both the rook on f8, and also the move d5, forking c6 and e6.

16...♗xc4 17 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 18 exf5 ♕xf5 19 d5 ♘d4 20 ♘xd4 exd4 21 ♖ac1! ♗xf1 22 ♖xc7+ ♗g7 23 ♗xf1 ♖f7 24 ♗d3 ♕f6 25 ♖xf7 ♕xf7 26 ♕g5

Webster-King, Dublin Z 1993. White is winning, because of the threats to h5 and g6.

F)

6...♘f6 7 0-0 0-0 8 f4

John Watson awards this move an exclamation mark, and he may be

right. At any rate I have a excellent score with this move (100%), although I have only been able to use it in rapid games. Most players continue 8 d3 here, giving Black a chance to play 8...♘h5 (or even 8...♘e8), when Black is ready to answer 9 f4 with 9...f5. Why allow Black this possibility?

However, having said that, this particular position can arise from other move-orders, so here is some analysis of 8 d3:

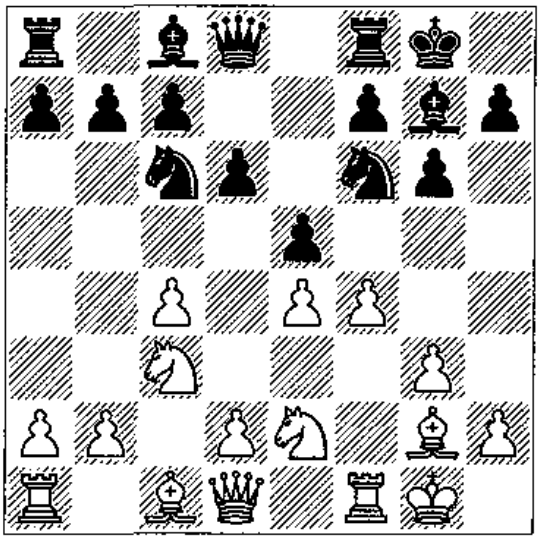
a) 8...♗e6 9 f4 transposes to the main line, at move 9.

b) 8...♘d4 9 ♘xd4 exd4 10 ♘e2 c5 11 b4! (the introduction to a plan whose goal is to create a mobile kingside phalanx of pawns) 11...♘d7 (11...cxb4 12 a3 bxa3 13 ♖xa3 leads to a position where White will recuperate his sacrificed pawn, as the d4-pawn is difficult to defend, whilst retaining pressure along the two open queenside files, e.g. 13...♗g4 14 f3 ♗d7 15 ♗b2 b5 16 cxb5 ♗xb5 17 ♕a1 ♘d7 18 ♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 19 ♕xd4 with a clear edge, Bischoff-Uhlmann, Munich 1996) 12 bxc5 dxc5 13 f4 f6 14 a4! (another important move, restricting any black counterplay on the queenside, where he enjoys a pawn majority) 14...a5 15 g4 ♘b8 16 ♘g3 ♘c6 17 ♖f2 ♗d7 18 ♗f3 ♖a7 19 h4 h6 20 ♖b2 ♕c7 21 ♖g2 and after careful preparation, White broke through to the weak light squares in the black camp by e5 and f5 in Petrosian-Bertok, Zagreb 1965.

c) 8...♘h5 is the main move. After 9 ♘d5, 9...f5 transposes to note 'c' to Black's 9th move in Line B, whilst following 9...♘d4 10 ♘xd4 exd4, 11 f4 c6 12 ♘b4 ♘f6 13 ♘c2 was played in Maus-Fransson, Gausdal 1990, but 11 g4!? ♘f6 12 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 13 f4 (or 13 g5 ♕e7 14 f4) has its points.

Returning to the position after 8 f4 *(D)*:

B



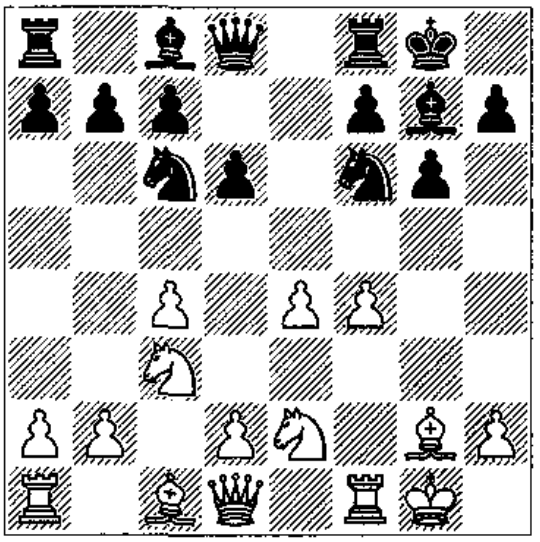
8...♗e6

White was threatening f5, followed by d3, then h3, g4-g5, etc., with a quick crush on the kingside, for example 8...♘d4 9 d3 c5? 10 f5! ♘e8 (if 10...gxf5 then 11 ♗g5 h6 12 ♗h4 ♗e6 13 ♘d5 ♗xd5 14 ♘xd4 cxd4 15 cxd5 is very strong) Ojanen-Lihflaender, Finland 1955, when 11 ♘xd4 cxd4 12 ♘d5, with the powerful threat of f6, seems almost decisive.

a) In my experience, most players prefer to give up the centre for piece-play by 8...exf4 9 gxf4 *(D)*, but this shows up another advantage of not playing an early d3: White can play d4

in one go, creating a massive centre without loss of time:

B



a1) 9...♘h5 10 d4 ♕h4 11 ♗e3 ♗h3 and now:

a11) 12 d5? (this weakens the long diagonal unnecessarily) 12...♘a5 13 ♕d3 ♗xg2 14 ♔xg2 f5!? 15 b4 fxe4?! (missing the far from obvious line 15...♕g4+! 16 ♘g3 g5!, e.g. 17 bxa5 gxf4 with advantage) 16 ♘xe4 ♗xa1 17 ♖xa1 ♖ae8? 18 bxa5 and Black has insufficient play for the material, Webster-Matveeva, Prestwich 1990.

a12) 12 ♘d5 seems more to the point, ready to answer ...f5 with e5, e.g. 12...♖ae8 13 ♘ec3, and Black will have to solve the problem of the defence of c7 sooner, rather than later, or 12...♕g4 13 ♖f2 ♖ac8 14 ♘ec3, exchanging the advanced black pieces, or driving them back.

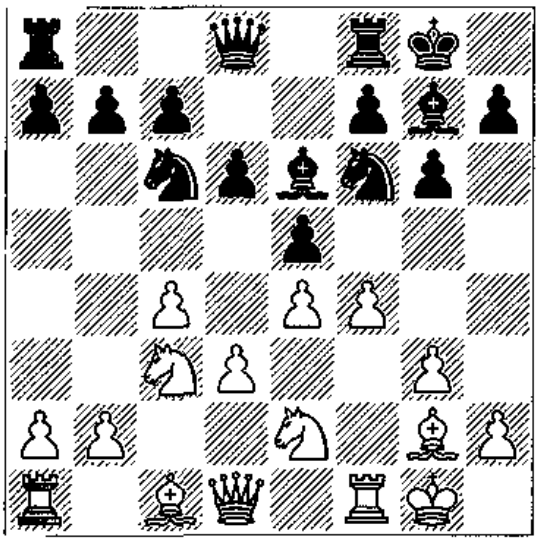
a2) 9...♗g4 10 d4 ♘a5 11 ♕d3 c5 12 d5 a6 13 ♗e3 ♗xe2 14 ♕xe2 ♘d7 15 e5! dxe5 16 f5 (a theme from the Benoni) 16...b6 17 ♘e4 ♖e8 18 ♖f2 ♘b7 19 ♖af1 ♕c7 20 ♘g5 ♘d6 21 fxg6 fxg6 22 ♘e6 winning by direct attack, A.Schneider-Kahn, Budapest 1991.

b) For once 8...♘d4 is fine, as the natural 9 d3 should be met by 9...♗g4, intending to exchange a couple of pieces, when White's space advantage will be less important, viz. 10 h3 ♗xe2 11 ♘xe2 ♘xe2+ 12 ♕xe2 ♘h5 13 ♔h2 exf4 14 gxf4 ♕h4, with reasonable chances, Ubilava-Lputian, New York 1990. Meanwhile, if 9 ♘xd4 exd4 10 ♘e2 then 10...d3 is feasible, as ♘f4 is no longer possible. Therefore, White should play 9 h3 c6 (if 9...♘xe2+ 10 ♘xe2 exf4 11 gxf4 ♘h5, Koshy-Fadi, Madras 1995, then 12 d4) 10 d3 ♘e8 11 ♘xd4 exd4 12 ♘e2 f5 13 ♔h2 with an edge to White, T.Roos-Stenzel, Wittlich 1983.

c) If 8...♘e7?! then 9 d3 (9 d4 is possible, and good) 9...h6 10 h3 exf4 11 gxf4 ♖e8 12 ♘g3 ♘c6 13 d4 ♘h7 14 ♗e3 ♕h4 15 ♔h2 ♘f6 16 f5 winning quickly, Hanley-Rozić, Mureck U-14 Ech 1998.

d) 8...♗g4?! 9 h3 ♗xe2 10 ♘xe2 exf4 11 gxf4 ♕e7 (11...♘h5 allows 12 d4, when 12...♕h4 13 ♗e3 ♘g3 14 ♘xg3 ♕xg3 should be answered by 15 ♖f3 with two bishops and a mobile centre, rather than 15 ♕d2? ♕xe3+! 16 ♕xe3 ♗xd4 winning a pawn, Prevot-Aveline, Val Maubuée 1989) 12 d3 ♘d7 13 d4 f5 14 e5 ♘d8 15 ♘c3, and White can build up behind his centre, Allan-Yanofsky, Canadian Ch 1963.

9 d3 *(D)*



White has to defend his c-pawn, and this gives Black time to cover f5.

9...♕d7 10 ♔h1

After 10 ♘d5 a strong Russian opponent of mine, who shall remain anonymous, now played the gruesome 10...♗h3? in a rapid game at Aubervilliers 1996, overlooking that 11 f5 was now possible. After 11...♗xg2 12 ♔xg2, the advance of the h- and g-pawns soon brought matters to a successful conclusion. 10...♗g4, threatening ...♘d4, would have kept the balance.

10...♖ab8 11 ♗e3 ♘g4 12 ♗g1 f5 13 exf5 gxf5 14 ♕d2 a6 15 ♖ae1

Bilek-Liptay, Hungarian Ch 1963. White enjoys a plus.

2 Grand Prix Attack Reversed: 2...♘c6 and 3...f5

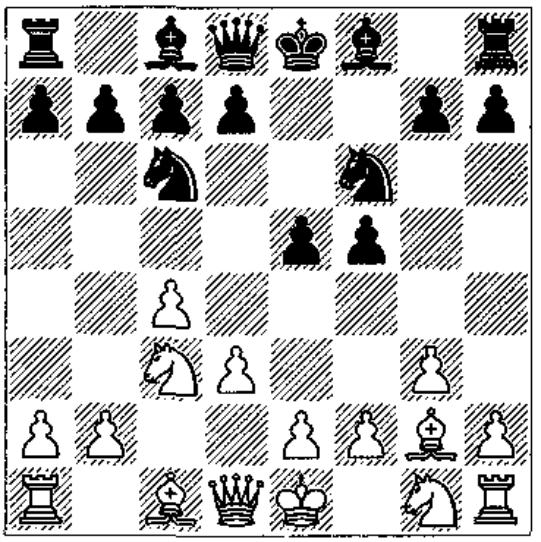
1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘c6 3 ♗g2 f5 4 ♘c3

As Black has the d4-square adequately controlled, the d4 idea of Chapter 7 is now impossible.

4...♘f6 5 d3 *(D)*

Best; White tries to reach a Botvinnik System. After 5 e3, intending ♘ge2 and d4, Ivan Sokolov discovered the reply 5...d5!?, when 6 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 7 cxd5 ♘b4 forces 8 d3 ♘xd5, when Black has a reasonable Sicilian structure, Lobron-I.Sokolov, Nussloch 1996. 8 ♕b3? allows 8...e4 9 f3 ♘d3+ 10 ♔e2 ♘c5 with advantage. This is very similar to the line we manage to avoid in Chapter 3.

B



There are two main possibilities for Black:

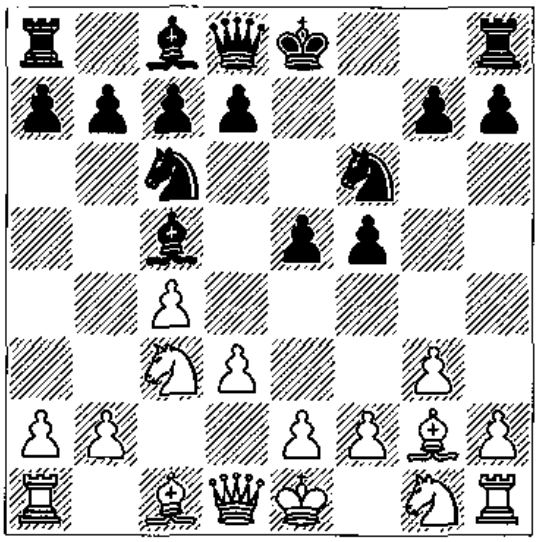
A: 5...♗c5 32
B: 5...♗b4 35

Otherwise, 5...g6 6 e4 will transpose to Chapter 1, Line B, after 6...d6 7 ♘ge2 or 6...♗g7 7 ♘ge2. There is also the interesting possibility 5...d6 and if 6 e4 then 6...g6 7 ♘ge2 ♗g7 will again transpose to Chapter 1. However, Black can also try 6...fxe4!? 7 dxe4 (7 ♘xe4 is also possible) 7...♘d4 8 ♘ge2 c5, reinforcing the outpost, as in the game Kosten-Levitt, British League (4NCL) 1998/9, which continued 9 0-0 ♗e7 10 f4 (White's plan is to ignore the powerful knight, and to play around it; Black's problem is that he can afford neither to swap this piece off, as d6 is backward, nor capture on f4, as the d4-knight's support would be undermined) 10...0-0 11 h3 ♗d7 12 g4! ♗c6 and now 13 ♘g3, intending g5, and h4, or ♘f5, would have confirmed White's superiority.

A)

5...♗c5 *(D)*

This move, pointing the bishop aggressively at f2, is similar to an idea in the Grand Prix Attack. In actual fact, the Fischer game (seen later) was the


W

precursor to that line. As Alekhine pointed out, the problem with such moves in the English, as opposed to Open Games (after 1 e4 e5) is that White can still play e3, and d4, expanding in the centre at the expense of this bishop.

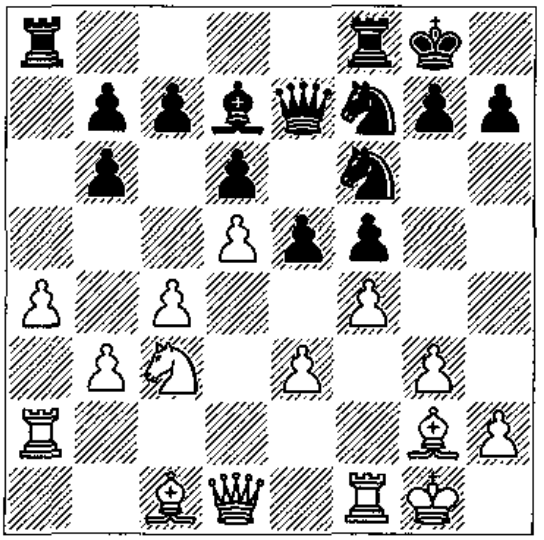
6 e3

Played so that the bishop is 'biting on granite'. As long as this pawn is on e3, defended by his brother on f2, the c5-bishop will have little activity on the g1-a7 diagonal.

6...f4?!

The radical attempt to re-open the diagonal. Actually, although this move is dubious, it has quite a good pedigree, having been first played by Fischer, and once used, to good effect, against a young Karpov.

6...0-0 avoids sacrificing a pawn, although after 7 ♘ge2 ♕e8 8 0-0 d6 9 d4 ♗b6 10 ♘a4 the disadvantages of placing the dark-squared bishop outside the black pawn-chain become evident, viz. 10...♗d7 11 b3 ♘d8 (trying to hold on to the bishop fared little better in Wl.Schmidt-Mitkov, Moscow OL 1994: 11...♗a5 12 a3 ♘d8 13 dxe5 dxe5 14 ♘c5 ♗c6 15 f3 ♗b6 16 ♘d3 a5 17 c5 ♗a7 18 b4, as the piece was buried alive) 12 ♘xb6 axb6 13 ♘c3 ♗c6 14 d5 ♗d7 15 f4 ♘f7 16 a4 ♕e7 17 ♖a2! *(D)*.


B

17...h6 18 ♖e2 ♖ae8 19 e4 exf4 20 exf5 ♕d8 21 ♖xf4, and White wins a pawn, whilst maintaining an enormous advantage in space, Stohl-Hraček, Gemersky Pohar 1991.

7 exf4

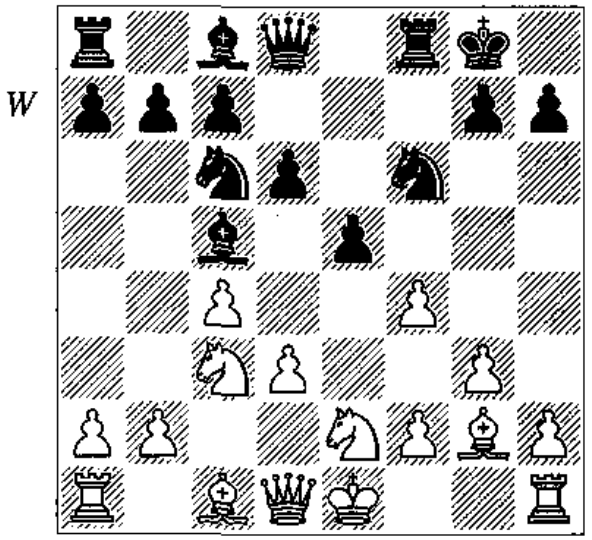
This move is never commented on, as far as I am aware, but 7 ♘ge2 must be worth a try, as after 7...fxe3 8 fxe3 d6 9 d4 ♗b6 10 b4!, we have transposed into the line 1 e4 c5 2 f4 ♘c6 3 ♘f3 g6 4 ♘c3 ♗g7 5 ♗c4 e6 6 f5 ♘ge7 7 fxe6 fxe6 8 d3 d5 9 ♗b3 b5, with colours reversed. What is so wonderful about White managing to lose a tempo like this? Well, only that this position is most unpleasant for White (or in our case, after 1 c4, for Black): normally he loses, so White

can happily play the same position reversed! For instance, 10...♘xb4?! 11 ♕a4+ ♘c6 12 c5 dxc5 13 d5 is winning for White, as is 10...exd4 11 exd4 0-0 12 ♗xc6 bxc6 13 c5.

7...d6 8 ♘ge2

White tries to finish his development, but the move 8 ♗e3!? should be considered: 8...0-0?! 9 ♗xc5 dxc5 10 ♗xc6 bxc6 11 fxe5 ♘g4 12 f4 ♕d4 13 ♕e2 ♗f5 14 ♘f3! ♕xd3 15 ♖d1 ♕e3 16 h3 ♕xe2+ 17 ♔xe2 ♘h6 18 ♔f2 and Black could resign with a clear conscience, C.Foisor-Cerrajeria, Ibercaja 1992.

8...0-0 *(D)*

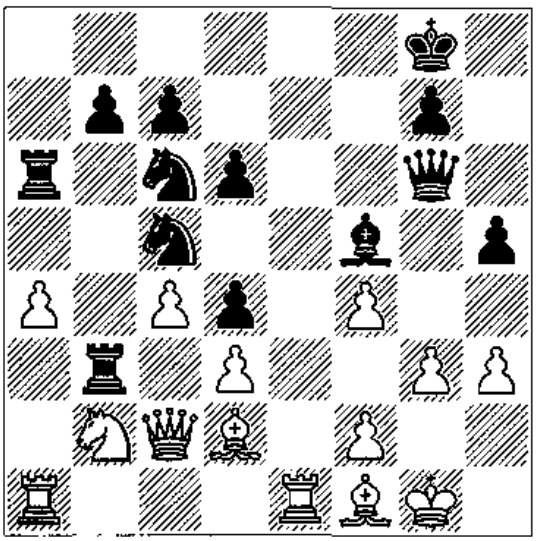


9 h3

Instead of this, 9 ♘e4 is supposed to be very good for White (as well), and even 9 0-0 ♕e8 would be fine for White if he played 10 ♘e4!. However, after the decentralizing move 10 ♘a4?! White has problems: 10...♗d4! 11 ♘xd4? (11 fxe5) 11...exd4 and now:

a) 12 a3 a5 13 b3 ♗f5 14 ♘b2 ♕g6 15 ♕c2 ♘d7 16 ♖e1 ♘c5 17 ♗f1 ♖a6! 18 ♗d2 ♖b6 19 ♗xa5 ♖xb3 20 ♗d2 ♖a8 21 a4 h5 22 h3 ♖a6 23 a5 reached exactly the same position as in the Fischer game, via a slightly different route, in Karpov-Bellon, Madrid 1973. The game now diverged with 23...♘b4 24 ♗xb4 ♖xb4 and Karpov managed to draw.

b) 12 h3 h5! 13 a3 a5 14 b3 ♕g6 15 ♘b2 ♗f5 16 ♕c2 ♘d7 17 ♖e1 ♘c5 18 ♗f1 ♖a6 19 ♗d2 ♖b6 20 ♗xa5 ♖xb3 21 ♗d2 ♖a8 22 a4 ♖a6! *(D)*.



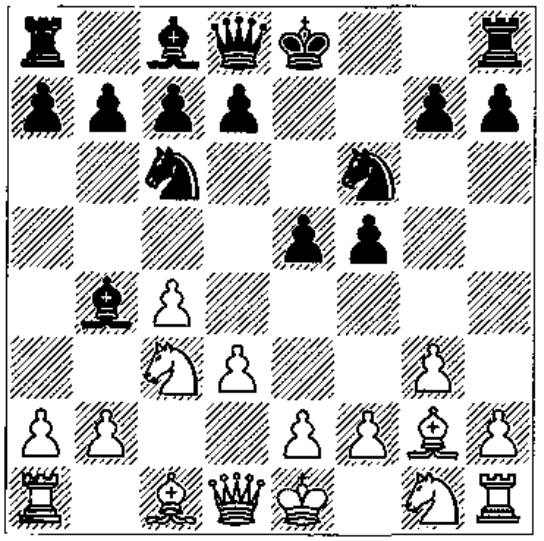
Amazingly, Black has coordinated all his pieces. Saidy-Fischer, USA Cht (New York) 1969 continued 23 a5 ♔h7 24 ♖ed1 b6 25 ♗e1 bxa5 26 ♘a4 ♖xd3 27 ♗xd3 ♗xd3 and Black won in style.

9...♕e8 10 ♘e4 exf4 11 ♗xf4 ♘xe4

Now, rather than the unclear continuation 12 dxe4, Šibarević-Kovačević, Yugoslavia 1970, the obvious move 12 ♗xe4! would leave White a pawn up, with little, if any, compensation for Black.

B)

5...♗b4 *(D)*



Black plays as in a 'Grand Prix Attack' reversed (positional line): he will take on c3 and set his pawns on dark squares. Then ...f4 and ...♕e8-h5 can lead to a strong kingside attack for Black if White is not careful.

6 ♗d2

It is certainly best to protect the c3-knight, as otherwise Black will definitely not miss the chance to double White's pawns.

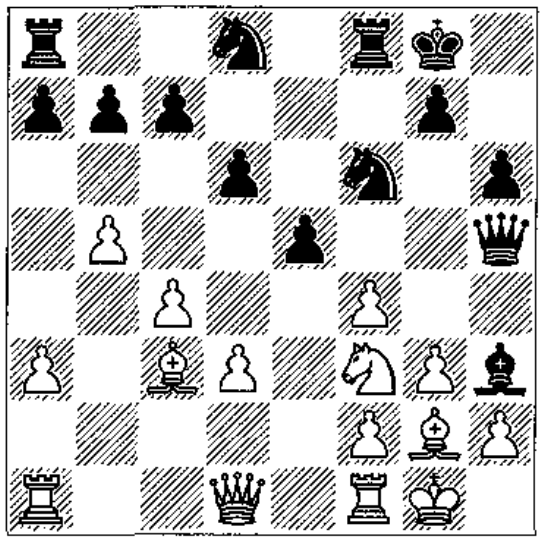
6...0-0 7 ♘f3 d6

The move 7...e4 is less logical. After 8 dxe4 ♘xe4 9 ♖c1 d6 10 0-0 ♗xc3 11 ♗xc3 ♗e6 12 ♘d4 ♗d7, White played 13 ♗e1 in Danailov-Leskovar, Ibercaja 1992, keeping his bishop-pair, and structural advantage.

8 0-0 a6!

Black prepares some 'luft' for his dark-squared bishop. Otherwise, White will take the bishop-pair with a small, but stable, advantage, and then play h4-b5:

a) 8...h6 9 a3 ♗xc3 10 ♗xc3 ♕e8 11 b4 ♕h5 12 b5 ♘d8 13 e3 f4 14 exf4 ♗h3 *(D)*.

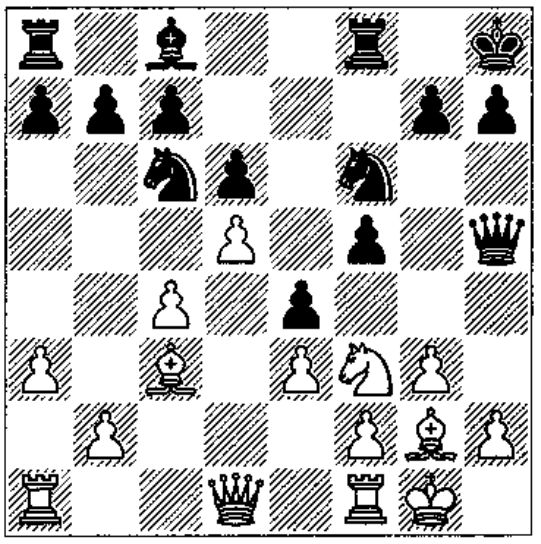


15 ♘xe5! ('sacrificing' a piece for three pawns, but killing the attack stone dead) 15...♗xg2 16 ♕xh5 ♘xh5 17 ♔xg2 dxe5 18 fxe5 g5 19 d4 c6 20 d5 ♖c8 21 bxc6 bxc6 22 e6 cxd5 23 e7 ♖e8 24 exd8♕ ♖exd8 25 ♗d4 ♖xc4 26 ♗xa7, winning easily, Kochiev-Nokes, Balatonbereny 1982.

b) 8...a5 9 ♖c1 ♔h8 10 ♘d5 ♗e6?! 11 ♗g5 ♘e7 must be good for White, Darga-Calvo, Las Palmas 1973, for instance: 12 a3 ♗xd5 13 cxd5 ♗c5 14 d4.

c) 8...♔h8 9 a3 (9 ♖c1 ♗xc3 10 ♗xc3 ♕e8 11 b4 ♕h5 12 b5 ♘d8 13 c5 f4 14 cxd6 cxd6 15 ♗b4 ♘f7 16 ♕b3 is also good for White, Rechlis-Zso.Polgar, Vienna 1996) 9...♗xc3 10 ♗xc3 ♕e8 11 e3 ♕h5 12 d4! (an interesting resource, which is worth remembering) 12...e4 13 d5 *(D)*.

13...exf3 (13...♘g4 14 h3 exf3 15 ♕xf3 regains the piece with advantage:



15...♘ce5 16 ♗xe5 dxe5 17 hxg4 ♕xg4 18 ♕xg4 fxg4 19 c5) 14 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 15 ♗xf3 ♕e8 16 dxc6 bxc6 17 b4 with a clear edge for White, Xu Jun-Gdanski, Moscow OL 1994.

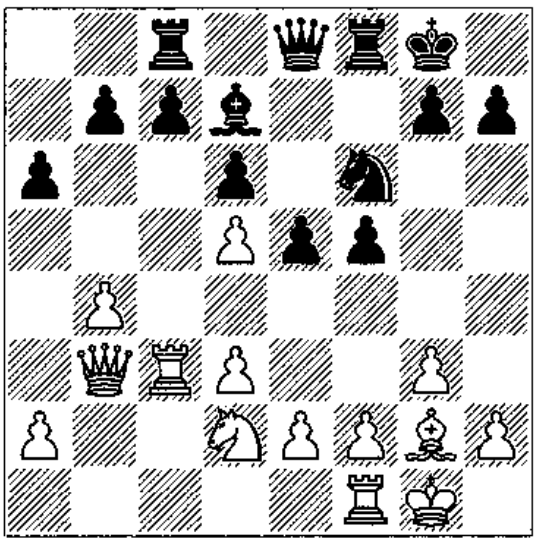
9 ♘d5

White is obliged to try a different scheme, as 9 a3 ♗c5 10 b4 would be met by 10...♗a7, and the bishop is safe.

9...♗xd2 10 ♘xd2 ♘e7 11 b4 ♘exd5?!

After this, the open c-file gives White a clear plan of action, and a clear advantage. 11...c6 is better.

12 cxd5 ♗d7 13 ♕b3 ♕e8 14 ♖ac1 ♖c8 15 ♖c3! *(D)*



Simple but effective. The c7-pawn's prospects are decidedly limited.

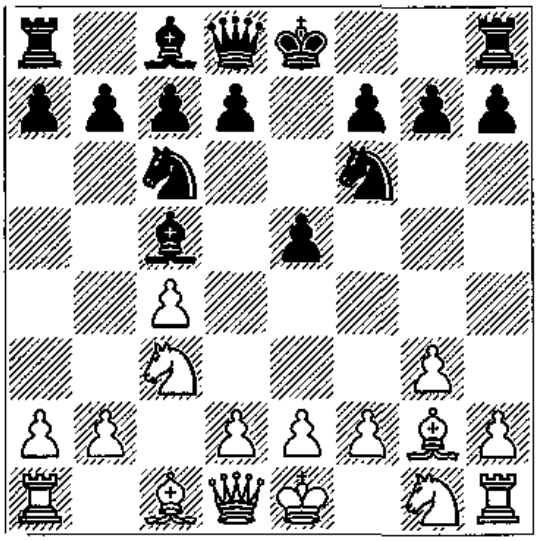
15...f4 16 ♖fc1 ♕h5 17 ♗f3 ♕h6

If 17...♗g4? then 18 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 19 ♖xc7 ♗xf3 20 ♘xf3 fxg3 21 hxg3 ♘g4 22 ♕c2! keeps the second rank defended.

Now (after 17...♕h6), instead of 18 ♘e4?!, Serper-Eingorn, USSR Cht (Azov) 1991, Serper gives 18 ♕b2! ♘e8 19 d4! as being critical for Black.

3 The Three Knights System: 4...♗c5

1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 ♘c6 4 ♘c3 ♗c5 *(D)*



W

The most active move, aiming at f2.

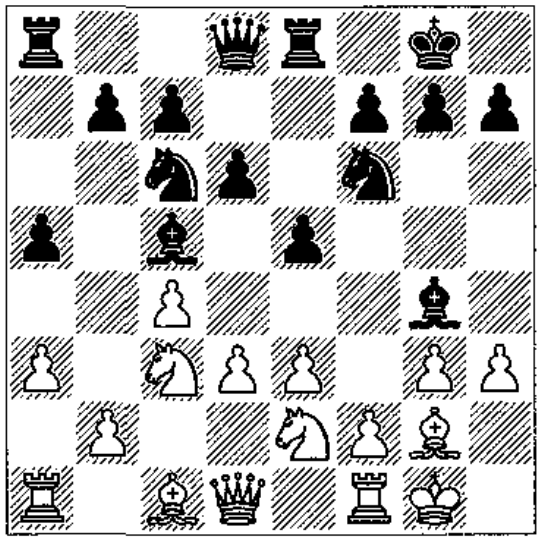
White's Strategy

The expanding centre tactic

The big drawback to lines where Black plays his bishop to c5 is that if White can play e3 and d4, the white centre will expand with gain of time.

The next diagram shows a good reason to tuck the bishop away on a7.

Black decided he would like to play ...♗e6 and ...d5 with a Sicilian-style position, but, unfortunately, after **10...♗e6?**, White won a piece by **11 d4 exd4 12 exd4** as 12...♗a7 allows 13 d5, forking knight and bishop, so Black chose **12...♘xd4 13 ♘xd4 ♗xc4 14 ♘f5 ♗xf1 15 ♔xf1** but White's two pieces proved more than a match for Black's rook and pawns. Notice that if the black dark-squared bishop had been on a7 originally, then White would have had the strong move 11 ♘d5, when 11...♘xd5? would lose a piece after 12 cxd5, and 11...♗xd5 would concede the bishop-pair.



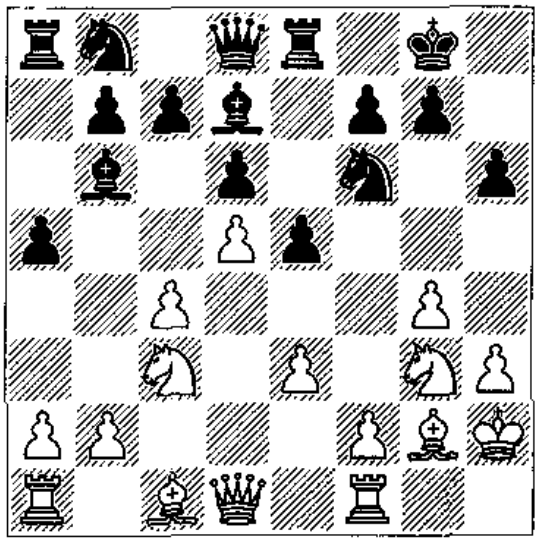
B

Grivas – Makri
Komotini 1992

Kingside attack

Another disadvantage of developing the black king's bishop outside the

pawn-chain is that it can no longer fulfil its defensive duties.



Korchnoi – Szabo
Bucharest 1955

White has just played d4-d5 and ♘g3, gaining control of the e4-square, much as in Chapter 13. He now set about the black kingside:

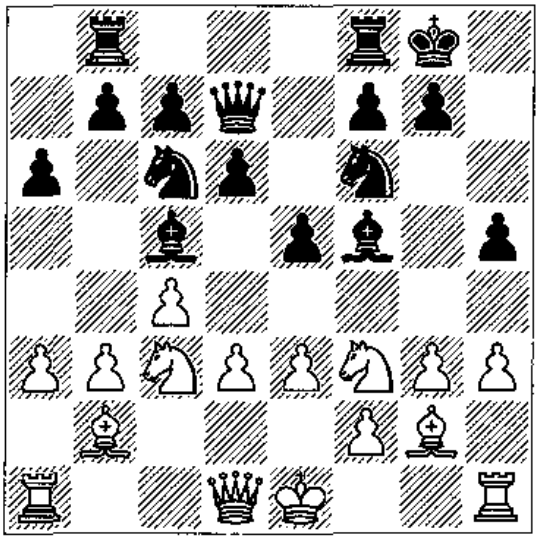
14 f4! exf4 15 exf4 ♘h7 16 g5!

The point is that 16...hxg5 17 fxg5 ♘xg5 18 ♕h5 f6 19 ♗xg5 fxg5 allows 20 ♗e4, winning.

The pivotal d5-square

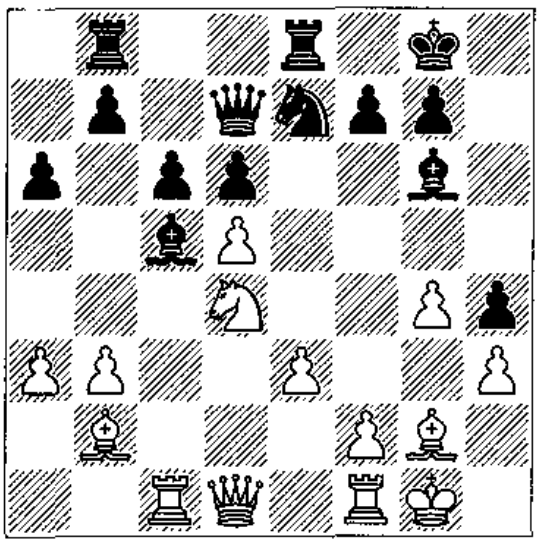
As in the whole of this book, White's attempt to control d5 is paramount. This line is no exception.

The diagram at the top of the next column shows an instructive type of position. White played **12 ♘d5!** and after the reply **12...♘xd5 13 cxd5 ♘e7**, continued **14 d4!**, exploiting the exposed position of the c5-bishop. Play proceeded **14...exd4 15 ♘xd4 ♗g6** with a structural advantage to



Spraggett – Cuadras
Roses 1992

White as he enjoys more space, an extra central pawn and possible pressure along the open c-file against the backward c7-pawn. Following **16 g4 h4 17 ♖c1 ♖fe8 18 0-0 c6?** *(D)* White won a pawn:

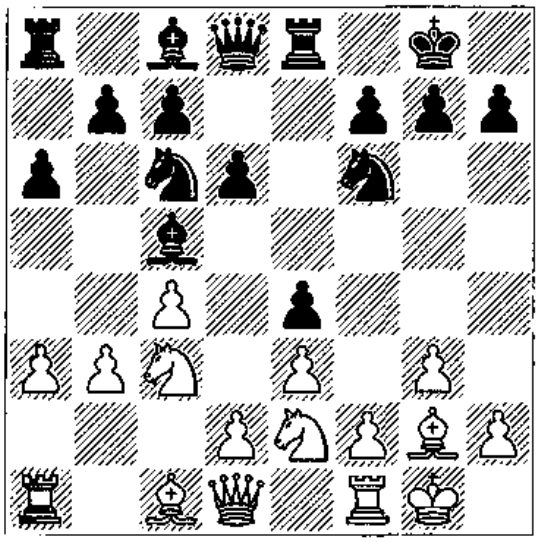


After **19 dxc6 bxc6 20 ♘xc6** Black discovered that he could not continue 20...♘xc6 owing to 21 ♖xc5 – the d-pawn is pinned against the undefended queen.

Black plays ...e4

Sometimes, Black decides to push his e-pawn to e4 before White plays d3, with the hope of establishing a piece on d3.

W



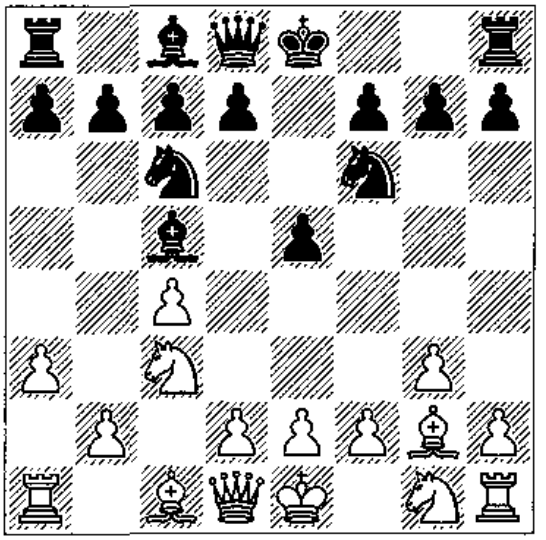
However, this plays into White's hands, for he can reply **10 d4!** (occasionally d3 is more appropriate), and on **10...exd3**, reply **11 ♘f4!** intending to recapture on d3 with the knight. This knight often turns out to be well-placed on the central d3-square.

The Theory of the Three Knights System with 4...♗c5

1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 ♘c6 4 ♘c3 ♗c5 5 a3! *(D)*

At first sight a strange and somewhat surprising move. In fact, White wishes to play e3 and ♘ge2, blunting the c5-bishop's a7-g1 diagonal, and threatening to smother this piece completely with an eventual d4. However, there is a problem, for after the immediate 5 e3, Black has the strong possibility 5...d5!? (or 5...0-0 6 ♘ge2 d5!? 7 cxd5 ♘b4 with the same idea), exploiting the weakened d3-square after 6 cxd5 ♘b4, because 7 e4?? allows 7...♘d3+ 8 ♔e2 ♘xf2, and therefore White has no good way to hang on to his d5-pawn, and must allow Black to recapture on d5 with a good game. My examination of games where White allowed this possibility suggest that Black's results are very good, all the more reason to avoid it!

B



5...a6

This is the most flexible reply, preserving the c5-bishop against the threat of b4, and returning to a standard main line. Obviously ...d5 is no longer possible as cxd5 simply wins a pawn, the c6-knight being unable to move to b4.

a) Should Black wish to attempt to gain an advantage from White's unusual move-order, he can try 5...♗d4?! (the only real way to attempt to exploit 5 a3), but after 6 ♘d5 0-0 7 ♘f3 (7 e3

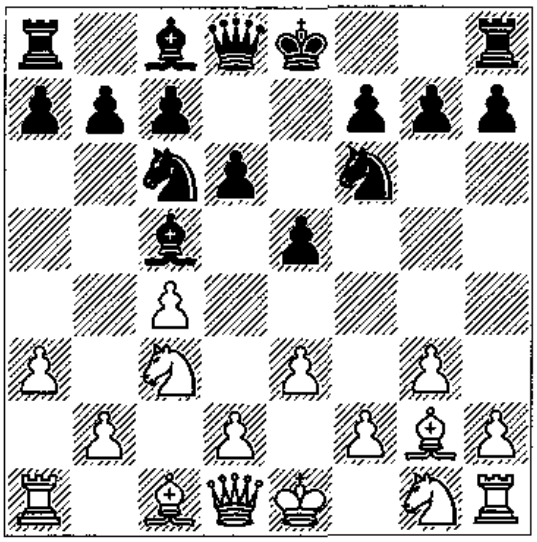
and 8 ♘e2 would seem even more sensible) 7...♗b6 8 d3 h6 9 0-0 d6, Black has only managed to lose moves with his bishop, Spraggett-Hodgson, Winnipeg 1997.

b) 5...a5 is less popular than the text-move, as although Black hereby manages to thwart White's intended b4, it is at the cost of weakening the b5-square. Further, White often refrains from playing b4 anyway, unless it gains some tactical advantage, and prefers b3. 6 e3 0-0 (6...d6 7 ♘ge2 ♗g4?! 8 h3 ♗h5 9 d3 0-0 10 g4 ♗g6 11 ♘g3 ♕d7 12 b3 ♖ab8 13 ♗b2 ♗b6 14 ♕e2 ♘e7 15 0-0-0! c6 16 f4 led to a crushing attack for White in Hickl-Schulz, Berlin 1992) 7 ♘ge2 ♖e8 8 0-0 d6 9 d3 ♗f5 (9...♗g4?! 10 h3 ♗e6? is a blunder, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter: 11 d4 exd4 12 exd4 ♘xd4 13 ♘xd4 ♗xc4 14 ♘f5 ♗xf1 15 ♔xf1 ♕d7 16 ♕d3 ♖e5 17 g4 ♖b8 18 ♗g5, with a large plus, Grivas-Miles, Komotini 1992) 10 h3 ♗a7 11 ♔h2 ♕d7 12 e4 ♗g6 13 ♗g5 ♘e7 14 f4 exf4 15 gxf4 ♗h5 16 ♕c2 ♗xe2 17 ♘xe2 ♔h8 18 ♗xf6 gxf6 19 ♕c3 ♘g8 20 ♘g3 led to a wonderful position for White in Spraggett-Polak, Cappelle la Grande 1998.

c) 5...0-0 6 e3 will transpose after 6...a6 to the main line, or line 'b' of this note after 6...a5, but there is the independent possibility 6...♖e8 7 ♘ge2 ♗f8 although White has everything he could wish for after 8 0-0.

d) 5...d6 6 e3 *(D)* and now Black can try:

B



d1) 6...a6 again transposes to the main line.

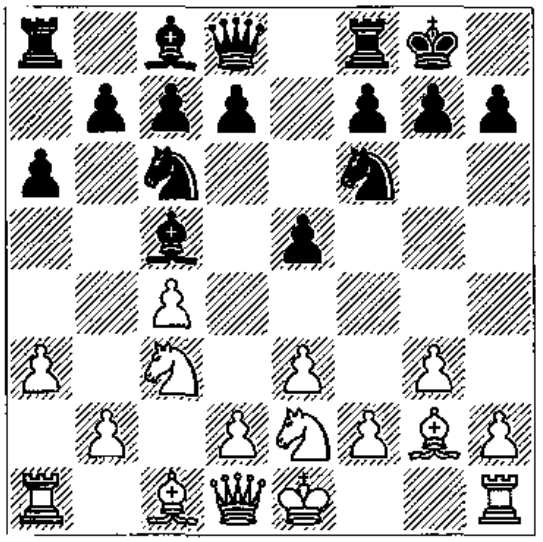
d2) The 'pseudo-active' 6...♗g4 is inappropriate here, for Black has no intention of swapping his bishop for the white knight and therefore the bishop just serves as a convenient target for White's kingside expansion: 7 ♘ge2 0-0 8 h3 ♗h5 9 g4 ♗g6 10 d4 (White's pawns expand, pushing back the black pieces) 10...exd4 11 exd4 ♗b6 12 ♗g5 (Black is now unable to break this pin and the threat of an eventual ♘d5 will cause the break-up of the black kingside) 12...♖e8 13 0-0 and the threats of ♘d5 and f4-f5 give White a clear plus, e.g. 13...♘a5?! 14 c5! dxc5 15 dxc5 ♗xc5 16 b4 ♗d3 17 ♖a2.

d3) 6...♗e6 7 b4 ♗b6 8 d3 ♕d7 9 h3 (White wants to preserve his king's bishop from exchange; 9 ♘ge2? would allow 9...♗h3) 9...0-0 10 ♘ge2 ♘d8 11 ♘a4 (demonstrating why Black should prefer a preparatory ...a6 or ...a5; White can simply play ♘d5 or ♘a4 and, with the bishop-pair, can

look forward to a bright future) 11...c6 12 ♘xb6 axb6 13 ♗b2 ♘e8 14 f4 f6 (White possesses the two bishops and more space, and he gradually squeezes Black until he achieves a decisive breakthrough) 15 g4 ♔h8 16 0-0 ♕e7 17 ♕e1 ♗f7 18 ♘g3 ♗g6 19 ♖d1 ♘c7 20 ♕f2 b5 21 c5 exf4 22 exf4 h6 23 ♗e4 ♗xe4 24 cxd6 ♕xd6 25 dxe4 ♕e6 26 e5 fxe5 27 ♗xe5 ♘d5 28 ♕b2 ♕f7 29 ♘h5 ♖g8 30 f5 b6 31 ♖fe1 ♘b7 32 ♕c1 ♔h7 33 ♕xc6 1-0 Taimanov-Hort, Tallinn 1975.

6 e3 0-0 7 ♘ge2 *(D)*

B



I think that this is the strongest square for the king's knight, for two reasons: it is possible to break any pin by the black queen's bishop, and, more interestingly, White can start a strong kingside initiative with f4-f5, h3 and g4, as the f2-pawn's advance is unhindered.

7...♖e8

If instead 7...d6 8 0-0 ♗a7 then 9 d3 (or first 9 h3, and then 10 d4 or first 10 ♔h2) would be similar to the text, but in this position GM Forintos has suggested an interesting idea to me: 9 f4!?, intending to play f5, h3, g4 and ♘g3, both extenuating White's central light-squared control, and preparing a kingside attack, e.g.:

a) 9...exf4 10 ♘xf4 with advantage.

b) 9...♗e6?! 10 f5 ♗xc4 11 d3 and now 11...♗b5 12 a4 wins the bishop, so Black can try 11...♘g4 12 dxc4 ♗xe3+ 13 ♗xe3 ♘xe3 14 ♕d3 ♘xf1 15 ♖xf1, but this must be almost winning for White, as he enjoys greater space, the makings of a kingside attack, and control of the important central light squares, e4 and d5.

c) 9...♗g4?! is hardly better: 10 h3 ♗d7 11 f5 ♕c8 12 g4 followed by ♘g3, with a ready-made kingside attack and light-squared control.

8 d3

I prefer the flexible move 8 0-0 here, retaining possibilities of playing d4, and also f4 (as in the previous note), and not fearing 8...e4?!, when 9 ♕c2 ♕e7 10 ♘d5 ♘xd5 11 cxd5 ♘d8 12 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 13 ♕xc5 should be good for White.

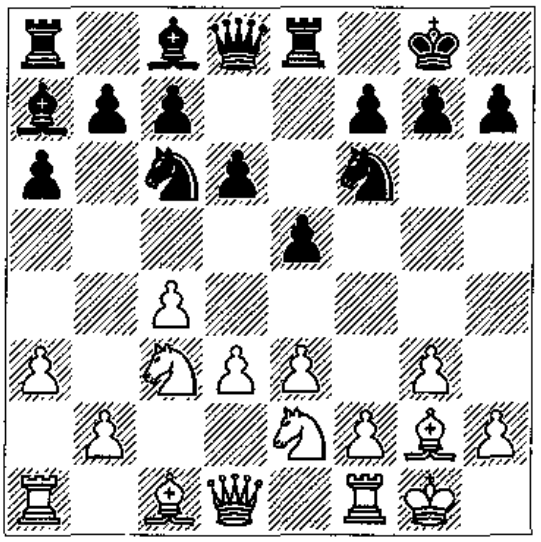
8...d6 9 0-0 ♗a7 *(D)*

An important position. Black has played sensibly, preserving his king's bishop and delaying a decision on his queen's bishop so as not to allow White a target. How should White play now?

10 b4 ♗f5

The line 10...♘e7 11 d4?! c6 12 ♗b2 (12 c5!?) 12...♗e6 might be better, as in Hertneck-Komarov, Vienna 1996.

W



Notice that, in many of these positions, the white pieces are on the 'right' side of their pawns, that is, behind them, supporting them, and the black pieces are on the 'wrong' side, in front of them, inhibiting their forward progress. The black pieces will have to make further moves, backwards or sideways, in order to gain some pawn control of the centre.

11 ♗b2

I think I would prefer 11 h3, intending ♔h2 and/or g4, then f4, exploiting the f5-bishop's position, and avoiding an eventual ...♗h3, exchanging White's important g2-bishop. One example: 11...h6 12 ♗b2 ♕d7 13 ♔h2 ♖ad8 14 ♖c1 ♕c8 15 ♘d5 ♘xd5 16 cxd5 ♘e7 17 e4 ♗g6 18 f4 f6 19 d4, with strong pressure, Miezis-Kristensen, Amsterdam 1996.

11...♕d7 12 ♘d5 ♘xd5 13 cxd5 ♘e7 14 ♖c1 ♖ac8 15 d4 ♘g6 16 dxe5 dxe5 17 ♘c3 ♗h3 18 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 19 ♘e4 ♖ed8

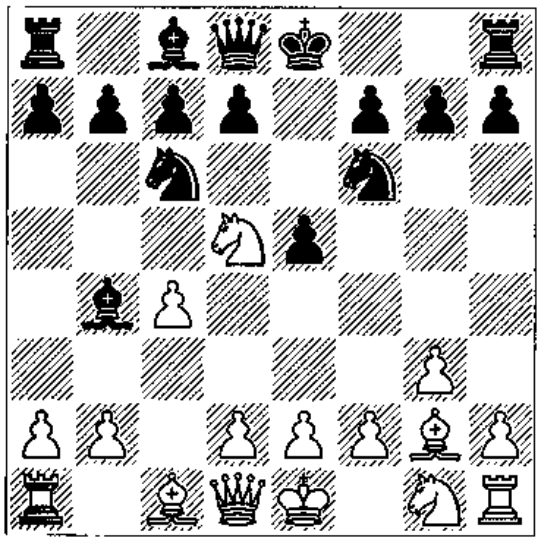
White is only a little better, although he won in forty moves in Miles-Korneev, Linares 1998.

4 The Three Knights System: 4...♗b4

1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 ♘c6 4 ♘c3 ♗b4

The variation 1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 g3 ♗b4 is one of the most important and most popular, if not the most popular, variations in the English. Black intends to complete his development and capture on c3, doubling White's pawns, and weakening his control over e4. Thus, many players will automatically play their bishop to b4 here, hoping, or expecting, to return to the main line after 5 ♘f3. However, White has a stronger possibility.

5 ♘d5! *(D)*



The point, taking firm control over d5 and leaving the b4-bishop looking rather silly.

5...♗c5

The best move, reaching a position similar to that of the 4...♗c5 variation, but with the white queen's knight on d5. I have never really understood what advantage this offers to Black. Anyway, this line should be compared with the previous section as play is, of course, very similar. The alternatives are:

a) 5...♘xd5 6 cxd5 ♘e7 7 ♘f3! e4!? (obviously 7...d6?? loses a piece to 8 ♕a4+, and 7...♗d6 8 e4 c6 9 d4! {9 0-0 cxd5 10 d4 dxe4 11 ♘xe5 also worked out well for White in the game Petrosian-Vaganian, USSR Ch 1975} 9...cxd5 10 dxe5 ♗b4+ 11 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 12 ♘xd2 d6 13 exd6 ♕xd6 14 0-0 ♗e6 15 exd5 ♘xd5 16 ♘e4 is crushing for White, Geller-Debarnot, Las Palmas 1976) 8 ♘g5 f5 9 0-0 ♘xd5 (if 9...h6 then 10 ♕a4!, with the vicious threat of 11 ♘e6, is strong, answering 10...♘xd5 with 11 ♘xe4!) 10 d3 regains the pawn with advantage.

b) 5...a5 6 ♘f3 (6 e3 and 7 ♘e2 is also good) 6...0-0 7 0-0 ♖e8 8 b3 d6 9 ♗b2 ♗g4 10 d3 ♗c5 11 h3 ♗h5 12 e3 ♘xd5!? 13 cxd5 ♘b4 14 g4 ♗g6 15 e4 c6 16 a3 ♘a6 17 dxc6 bxc6 18 d4! exd4 19 ♘xd4 and White soon won

material in Miles-Adams, Palma de Mallorca 1989.

c) 5...0-0 is also possible, conceding the bishop-pair but continuing development. Instead of the 6 e3 ♘xd5 7 cxd5 ♘e7 8 ♘e2 of Chiburdanidze-Skembris, Karditsa 1995, White might consider 6 ♘xb4 ♘xb4 7 d3 with a slight edge, or even 7 d4!? exd4 8 a3 ♘c6 9 ♘f3 and 10 ♘xd4.

6 e3

Compared with the 4...♗c5 line, White no longer has to worry about Black's dangerous ...d5 possibility here, and therefore does not have to bother with the prophylactic a3 move.

6...0-0

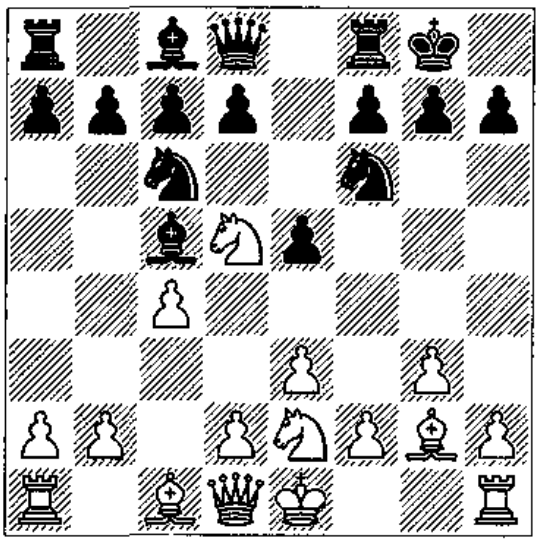
Black can also defer castling by 6...d6 7 ♘e2 with the further possibilities (7...0-0 transposes to 6...0-0):

a) 7...♘xd5 8 cxd5 ♘e7 9 0-0 0-0 10 d4 ♗b6 (10...exd4 11 ♘xd4 ♘f5 12 ♘b3 ♗b6 13 a4 a6 14 ♗d2 leads to the structure discussed in the introduction to the previous chapter, and is very pleasant for White, K.Rasmussen – Brinck-Claussen, Danish Ch 1991) 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 ♘c3 ♘f5 13 ♘a4 ♘d6 14 b3 ♗d7 15 ♘xb6 axb6 16 ♗b2, and the two bishops offer White a plus, Smejkal-Uhrath, Berlin 1988.

b) 7...♗g4?! seems active, but simply gives White free tempi as he kicks this piece away: 8 h3 ♗h5?! (8...♗f5 and 8...♗d7!? are superior) and now, instead of 9 0-0?! ♘xd5 10 cxd5 ♘e7 11 g4 ♗g6 12 d4 ♗b6 13 a4 a5 14 dxe5?! (or 14 f4!?, when 14...exf4 15 ♘xf4 is good for White, but 14...f6! might hold the balance) 14...dxe5 15 b3 ♘c8! (planning to come to the blockading square d6; 15...0-0 allows 16 ♗a3, with an edge), with reasonable play for Black, Arbakov-Goldin, Berlin 1993, Zoltan Almasi indicates that 9 d4! would have led to a considerable advantage for White, viz. 9...♗b6 (not 9...♘xd5? 10 cxd5 ♗b4+ 11 ♔f1 winning a piece, as 11...♘e7 allows 12 ♕a4+ and 13 ♕xb4, whilst 9...exd4 10 exd4 ♘xd4? 11 g4! also wins, as 11...♘xe2 12 ♕xe2+ is check) 10 g4 ♗g6 11 f4!, when the g6-bishop is looking surrounded, e.g. 11...exf4 12 exf4 ♘e4 13 0-0 winning.

7 ♘e2 *(D)*

B



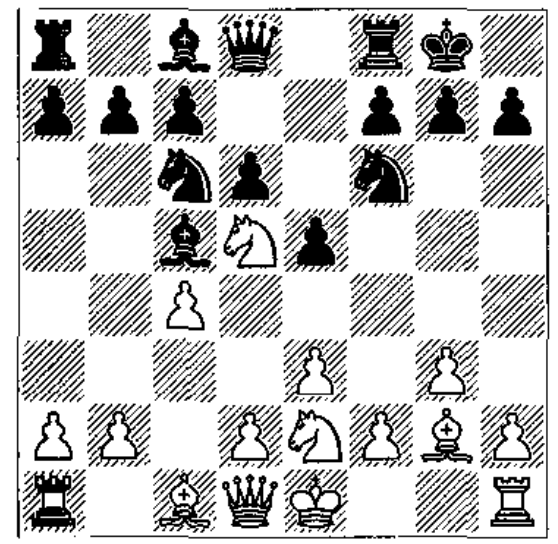
7...d6 *(D)*

Black can tuck his king's bishop away on f8 instead: 7...♖e8 8 0-0 and now:

a) 8...♘xd5 (as ever, tactical tries tend to rebound against Black) 9 cxd5 ♘b4?! (9...♘e7 10 d4 exd4 11 ♘xd4 gives White a pleasant advantage) 10 d4! exd4 11 a3 d3 (11...dxe3 12 axb4

exf2+ 13 ♔h1 ♗b6 is quite hopeless for Black, e.g. 14 ♘c3 ♕e7 15 ♘a4 ♕xb4 16 ♗d2 ♕d4 17 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 18 ♗c3, picking up the f2-pawn, when the extra piece, powerfully placed on c3, will triumph; putting the knight offside by 11...♘a6 12 b4 ♗b6 13 ♘xd4 is little better) 12 ♘f4 ♘c2? (12...♘a6 13 ♘xd3 ♗b6 14 b4) 13 ♖b1 wins the c2-knight.

b) 8...♗f8 9 d3 ♘xd5 10 cxd5 ♘e7 11 f4! (now that the black king's bishop is removed from the a7-g1 diagonal, White can continue his kingside plan unhindered) 11...exf4 12 ♘xf4 ♘f5 13 ♕f3 ♕e7 14 ♔h1 d6 15 ♗d2 ♗d7 16 e4 ♘h6 17 ♖ae1 f6 18 d4 ♘f7 19 ♕b3 ♖ab8 20 ♕a3 a6 21 b4 c5 22 bxc5 dxc5 23 e5 ♗b5 24 d6 ♕d8 25 ♗d5 and White won quickly in Rogoff-Blumenfeld, Lone Pine 1976.



8 0-0 a6

If Black wishes to limit his disadvantage, he should certainly preserve his bishop from exchange against the white knight, as the alternatives both allow White the bishop-pair and a space advantage:

a) 8...♖e8 9 d4 ♗b6 10 ♘xb6 axb6 11 d5 ♘e7 12 e4 ♘g6 13 ♘c3 ♔h8 14 b4, Wirthensohn-Wittmann, Aosta 1988.

b) 8...♗b6 9 ♘ec3 ♘xd5 10 ♘xd5 ♘e7 11 ♘xb6 axb6 12 d4 exd4 13 ♕xd4 ♘c6 14 ♕c3 ♕e8 15 b3 f6 16 ♕d2 ♔h8 17 ♗b2, Kacheishvili-Epishin, Brno 1994.

9 a3 ♗d7 10 b4 ♗a7 11 ♗b2 ♖b8 12 f4!

White commences the typical kingside attack.

12...♘xd5

In an attempt to avert White's attack, Black tries to break out with a pawn sacrifice.

13 cxd5 ♘e7 14 fxe5 dxe5 15 ♗xe5 ♗b5

Black is hoping to recoup the d-pawn, but as well as the interesting exchange sacrifice played by Makarov, White could certainly consider the line 16 a4! ♗d3 (if 16...♗xe2 17 ♕xe2 ♘xd5 then 18 ♕c4 should win for White) 17 ♖a3 ♗c4 18 ♖c3 b5 19 ♘f4! as 19...♗xf1 will be met by 20 ♗xc7 with considerable advantage.

16 ♘f4!? ♗xf1 17 ♕xf1 ♘g6 18 ♗c3 ♕g5 19 ♔h1 ♖fe8 20 ♘xg6 hxg6 21 ♕c4 ♖e7 22 ♖f1

White has good compensation, Makarov-Semeniuk, Novosibirsk 1989.

5 Dragon Reversed: 2...♘f6 and 3...d5

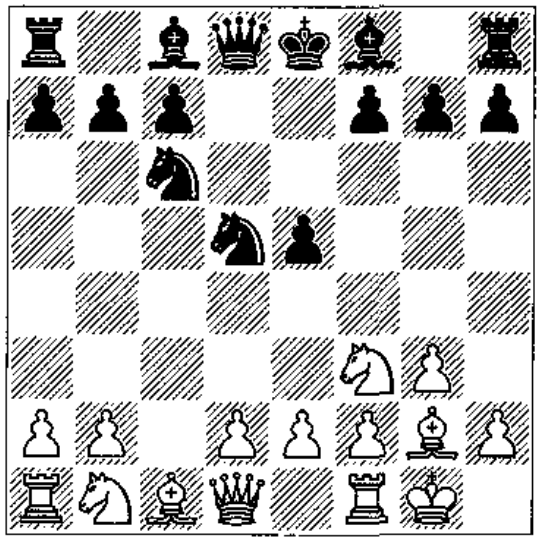
1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 d5

This is one of the most popular lines in the English. Black transposes into a Dragon reversed, with a tempo less, of course. Personally, I never thought too much of the position with a tempo more, and could never understand why players who do not like 1 e4 with White would want to play these positions with a tempo less, and devoid of the most exciting possibilities!

4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 ♘f3 ♘c6

5...e4? just loses a pawn to 6 ♕a4+ and ♕xe4+, of course.

6 0-0 *(D)*



Now there is a divide:

A: 6...♘b6	46
B: 6...♗e7	50

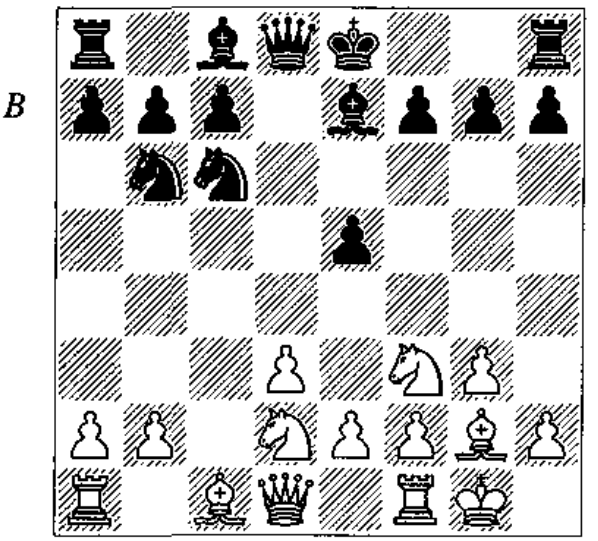
Other 6th move alternatives are discussed in Line B.

A)

6...♘b6

This is the best move, as, although it wastes a development move, and moves the knight from the centre, it is important for Black to establish control over d4. The alternatives are discussed in Line B.

7 d3 ♗e7 8 ♘bd2!? *(D)*

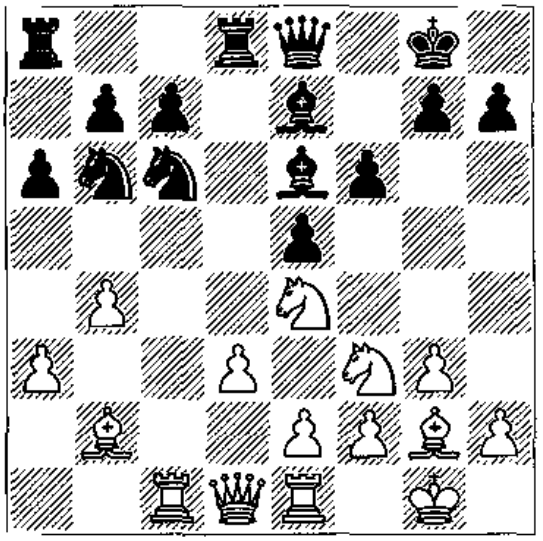


The main benefit of playing this extremely logical move is that you thereby avoid all the latest theory in the ♘c3 lines. You will immediately know more about the variation than your opponent! As opposed to the

position after 8 ♘c3, which resembles a Dragon, after 8 ♘bd2 the position reminds me more of a Najdorf (still with a tempo more, or two if you count the loss of time entailed by Black's 6...♘b6).

White's strategy

As in the Sicilian, White hopes to prove that the black e-pawn is a weakness. His ideal piece formation is something like the following:

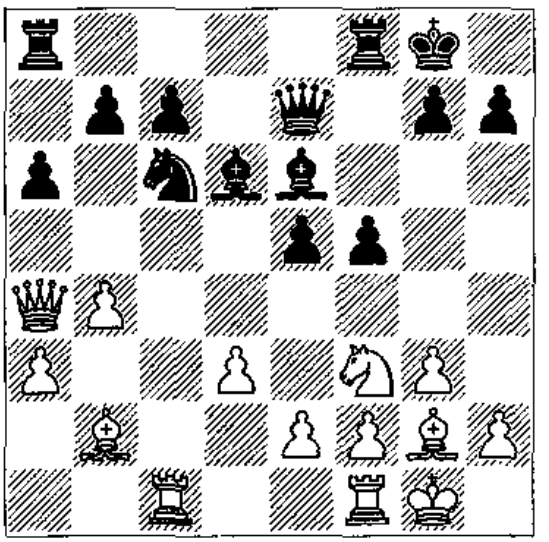


He plays a3 and b4 (or b3 if Black stops this with ...a5), and develops his queen's bishop on b2. He can then bring his queen's rook to the open c-file. The d2-knight should now find itself a more active square. In the diagram it has gone to e4, whence it will proceed to c5. The pressure on the black queenside will be so great that he will be obliged to capture on c5, conceding the bishop-pair.

Often, White will be able to utilize his extra central pawn by d4, or e4 and d4.

The standard exchange sacrifice

Just as in the similar positions with colours inverted, the rook's presence on the c-file can be utilized in the most sweeping fashion.



Cu. Hansen – Hector
Reykjavik Z 1995

White played **15 ♖xc6!** (giving up the rook for the knight, but shattering Black's queenside pawn-structure, and winning the important e5-pawn) **15...bxc6 16 ♘xe5 f4 17 ♕xc6 fxg3 18 hxg3** and went on to win.

8...0-0

The most common move.

a) In Mozetić-Dževlan, Yugoslav Ch 1991, Black tried to defer castling, but this turned out to be very risky, viz. 8...♗g4!? 9 a3 a5 10 b3 f5?! (Black plays aggressively, as if he thinks he is White – a common mistake in this line; 10...0-0 is more prudent, ready to parry the attack on e5 with ...f6) 11 ♗b2 ♗f6 12 b4! (of course, White

attacks the centre from the side, threatening b5, just as in the Najdorf) 12...♕e7 (12...axb4 is answered by the thematic 13 axb4 ♖xa1 14 ♕xa1 ♘xb4 15 ♗xe5, with considerable advantage for White because of his better pawn-structure and extra centre pawns) 13 b5 ♘d8 14 h3 ♗h5 15 a4 c5 16 bxc6 ♘xc6 17 e4! (White fixes the e5-pawn) 17...0-0-0 18 ♗a3! ♕c7 19 ♕b3! ♗f7?! 20 ♕b5! fxe4 21 ♘xe4 ♖d5 22 ♗d6!, winning quickly.

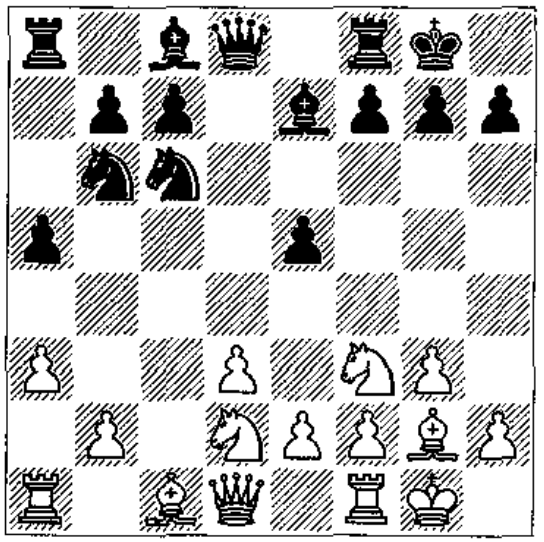
b) An even riskier idea is 8...g5?!, as in O.Foisor-Tukmakov, Martigny 1995, where Black plans a kingside pawn avalanche and queenside castling, but wastes time that should be used to develop pieces and weakens his pawns. 9 b3 g4 10 ♘e1 ♗e6 11 ♗b2 (this is sensible, although 11 ♗xc6+!? bxc6 12 ♗b2 looks very tempting, when the e1-knight will return to the fray via c2 or g2) 11...♘d5 and now, instead of 12 ♖c1 ♕d7 13 ♘c4 f6 14 ♘c2 0-0-0 15 d4, when Black managed to hang on by playing 15...♘b6!, the immediate 12 ♘c4 f6 13 ♘c2 ♕d7 14 d4 is strong.

9 a3

Concretely, White wishes to expand on the queenside by b4 and pressurize the e5-pawn by ♗b2. He can play along the c-file, or prepare the central strikes d4 and e4. There is also a common possibility of playing b3 and ♘c4, and, should Black capture this knight, recapturing with the b-pawn and playing along the b-file.

9...a5 *(D)*

As in the Sicilian, this move is best, restricting White's queenside expansion. Abramović-D.Marić, Yugoslav Ch (Banja Vrucica) 1991 is an example of what can go wrong for Black if he plays otherwise: 9...♖e8 10 b4 ♗f8 11 ♗b2 a5?! (this leaves Black in difficulties, but even after the better 11...a6 12 ♖c1, White threatens the standard exchange sacrifice ♖xc6, and ♘xe5) 12 b5 ♘d4 13 ♘xd4 exd4 14 a4 ♗b4 15 ♘b3 and the d-pawn was lost.



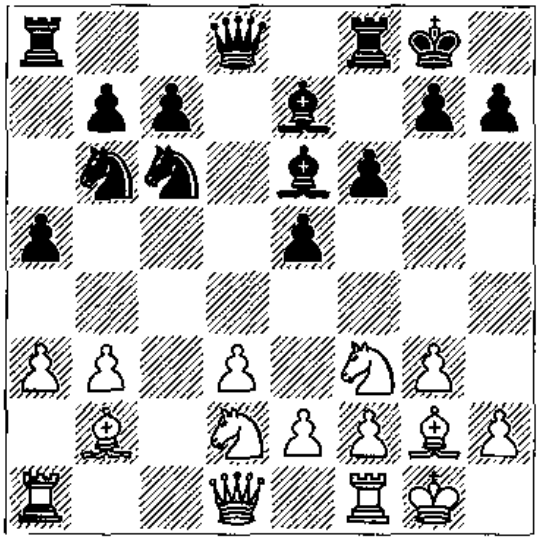
10 b3 ♗e6

Black intends to play the slightly passive, but perfectly reasonable ...f6 to defend his e-pawn, and is ready to answer 11 ♘c4 with 11...♘xc4 12 bxc4 e4.

Another idea is 10...♖e8 11 ♗b2 (11 ♘c4 ♘xc4 12 bxc4 is also a typical, and good, plan in this line: White can put the b-file to good use) 11...♗f8, and now Lalić played 12 ♕c2 against De Boer, Groningen 1992, but 12...♗g4 13 e3 ♕d7 14 d4 exd4 15 ♘xd4 ♘xd4

16 ♗xd4 was nothing special after 16...c5!. The most logical move is 12 ♖c1, with ideas of ♖xc6, and ♘e4-c5. Why not exploit the fact that the white queen's knight is on d2, and not c3, and that the c-file is open? Then 12...♘d4 seems best, when, rather than the flashy 13 ♘xe5!? ♖xe5 14 e3 ♘xb3 15 ♕xb3 a4 16 ♕a2 of P.Schlosser-Romanishin, Altensteig 1992, which was soon drawn (although, here, 16 ♕c3!? ♖b5 17 ♕d4 might merit a try), 13 e3 appears sensible, for example 13...♘xf3+ 14 ♘xf3 f6 15 ♕c2 c5 16 ♘d2 a4 17 ♘c4 ♗e6, when instead of the slow 18 ♗a1, as in Rotshtein-Gipslis, Minsk 1993, the simple 18 bxa4 ♘xc4 19 dxc4 leads to White's advantage.

11 ♗b2 f6 *(D)*



12 ♕c2 ♕d7

12...♖f7 is a solid move, intending to clamp down on d4 by ...♖d7, but following 13 ♖fd1 ♗f8 14 e3 ♖d7 15 d4 cxd4, instead of 16 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 17 ♗xd4 c5! 18 ♗c3 (18 ♗xc5? ♕xc5 19 ♕xc5 ♗xb3) 18...a4, when Black obtains a passed c-pawn, Rotshtein-Bareev, Vienna 1996, I like the look of 16 ♗xd4!? as 16...♘xd4?! 17 ♘xd4 ♗g4 (17...♗d5 18 ♗h3 ♖e7 19 e4 ♗f7 20 ♘f5) 18 ♗xb7 ♗xd1 19 ♖xd1 is better for White.

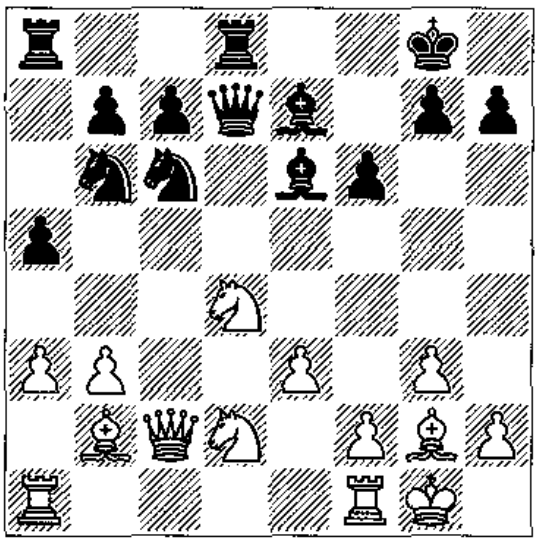
13 e3! ♖fd8

The more direct 13...♗f5!? leads to an edge for White following 14 ♘e4 ♖fd8 15 ♖fd1.

14 d4

The same idea as in the Rotshtein game: White exchanges his d-pawn for Black's e-pawn. In theory this leaves White with an extra central pawn, and a better protected king (four friendly pawns surround it as opposed to Black's three), not to mention a possible minority attack against Black's queenside. However, White has to take care that Black cannot successfully advance his extra queenside pawn, as this may possibly prove difficult to stop.

14...exd4 15 ♘xd4 *(D)*

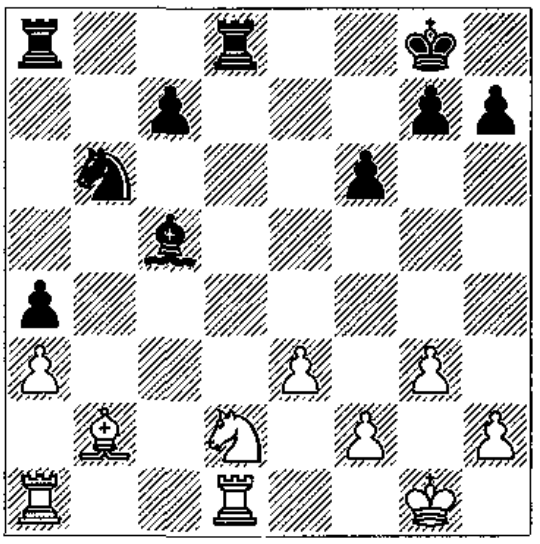


15...♗d5?!

I am not too keen on this move, as it leaves Black positionally worse. I feel that he should 'take the bull by the horns' and try 15...♘xd4 16 ♗xd4 c5!? 17 ♗xc5!? (17 ♗c3?! a4!) 17...♖ac8 18 b4 ♘d5! (18...♘a4 19 ♘e4 b6? 20 ♖ad1 ♕e8? 21 ♗xe7! wins) with a sharp position, e.g. 19 ♘b3!? b6 (or 19...axb4 20 e4 ♗xc5 21 exd5 ♗xd5 22 ♘xc5 ♗xg2 23 ♘xd7 ♖xc2 24 ♖fd1, when the threat of ♘xf6+ keeps White on top) 20 e4 bxc5 21 exd5 ♗f5 22 ♕a2! axb4 23 d6! ♕xd6 24 ♘xc5+, when White has a pawn more, and all the chances. This is quite complicated, and there may always be an improvement or two lurking in the analysis, but I feel that White should have the upper hand.

16 ♗xd5+ ♕xd5 17 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 18 ♕xc6 bxc6 19 ♖fd1 a4! 20 b4 c5 21 bxc5 ♗xc5 *(D)*

W



22 ♖ac1

Bringing the white king to e2 is also a reasonable plan. Despite the sensitive a3-pawn, White is better because he has only two pawn-islands against Black's three, and therefore Black will, sooner or later, be obliged to defend his two queenside pawns, and this will lead to passivity.

22...♖a5! 23 ♖c2 ♖b5 24 ♖a1! ♗f8 25 ♖a2! ♖bd5?!

25...c5 offers better chances.

26 ♗c1 ♖8d7 27 ♔f1

Chernin-Smejkal, Altensteig 1991. White has a clear advantage. He will centralize his king and gang up on the weak black queenside pawns.

B)

6...♗e7

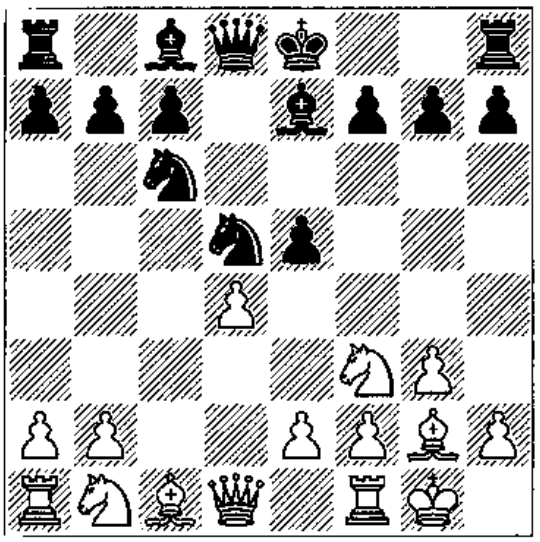
Actually, this is the move invariably played against me. It seems that opponents who would immediately play ...♘b6, were White to play ♘c3 at some point, somehow forget that the real point of this is to stop White playing d4.

Note that Black is obliged to enter one of the more positional lines, as it is impossible to play a reversed Yugoslav Attack – the most dangerous variation against the Dragon. For instance, 6...♗e6?! allows 7 d4 exd4 (7...♕d7?? is a horrible blunder, losing a piece immediately to 8 e4, Chiburdanidze-Moreno Bello, Seville 1994) 8 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 9 ♕xd4 ♘b4 10 ♕e4 c6 11 ♘c3 ♗c5 12 a3 ♘d5 13 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 14 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 15 ♗xd5 cxd5 16 ♖d1 ♖d8 17 b4 ♗b6 18 ♗b2 0-0 19 ♗d4 with a very favourable IQP ending for White, Sher-*ChessMachine*, Dortmund

1992. The human being went on to win comfortably.

Once again, 6...e4?! is faulty, as after the forced retreat 7 ♘e1, Black has to give up his centre, viz. 7...♗f5 8 d3. However, 6...♗c5 is possibly not too bad, although 7 a3 a5 8 ♘xe5 ♗xf2+ 9 ♖xf2 ♘xe5 should favour White's two bishops.

7 d4 *(D)*



7...exd4

7...e4!? has been played against me any number of times, and then, following 8 ♘e5, my opponents normally slump into a deep huddle, realizing that something has gone wrong. For example:

a) 8...♘xe5? 9 dxe5 ♗f5 (9...f5 10 exf6 ♘xf6 is also very good for White, e.g. 11 ♕b3 {confining the king to the centre} 11...♕d6 12 ♘c3 ♕c6 13 ♗f4 ♗e6 14 ♕b5 ♗d7 15 ♕e5 ♘g4 16 ♕xe4, Kosten-Fejzovski, Tarbes 1996) 10 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 11 ♕a4+ ♕d7 12 ♕xe4 h5 (the 12...0-0-0 13 ♘c3 ♘xc3 14 bxc3 h5 15 ♖b1 ♕d5 16 ♕xd5 ♖xd5 17 f4 of Chiburdanidze-Wang Ping, Shanghai wom Ct 1992, is similar) 13 ♘c3 0-0-0 (should White play the ending or not? Yes!) 14 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 15 ♕xd5 ♖xd5 16 f4 ♗c5+ 17 ♔g2, when Black's temporary initiative counts for little, and White soon made the extra pawn count in Kosten-Godard, Reims 1994.

Although this line is not too important theoretically (a real backwater, in fact – the entire variation does not even merit a line in *ECO A*), there are a lot of easy points to be made in this line for the conscientious reader!

b) However, the position is not so awful for Black at all, as he can play 8...f5! 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 (Black's doubled c-pawns are offset, somewhat, by his strong e-pawn) 10 ♘c3 0-0 (10...♗e6 11 ♕a4 ♕d6 12 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 13 ♗f4 ♕d7 is worse for Black, Kupreichik-Smirin, Daugavpils 1989) 11 ♕a4 ♕d6 12 ♘xd5 cxd5 13 ♗f4 ♕a6 14 ♕c2 c6 15 ♖fc1, with the slightest of edges, Dorfman-Ivanchuk, Debrecen 1988.

8 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 9 ♕xd4 ♘f6

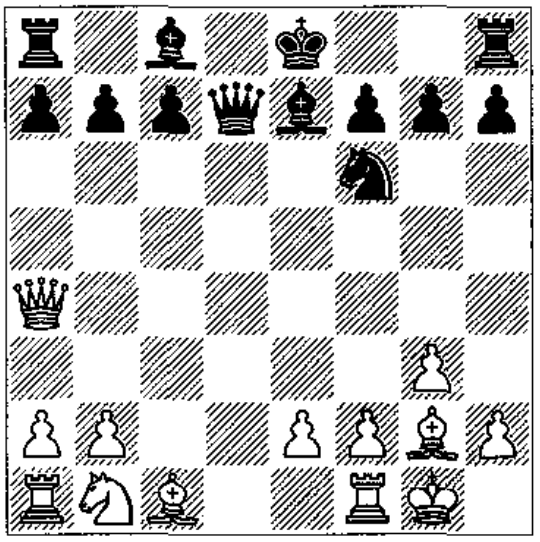
Whilst superficially attractive, the move 9...♘b4? actually seems to lose after 10 ♕xg7! ♗f6 11 ♕h6 ♘c2 12 ♘c3 1-0 Davies-Thiel, London Lloyds Bank 1994. Black's resignation was by no means premature as, for instance, if 12...♘xa1, then 13 ♖d1 ♗d7 14 ♘d5 is devastating.

10 ♕a4+ ♕d7 *(D)*

10...c6 11 ♖d1 ♕b6 12 ♘c3 should also be a little better for White, who

can prepare the advance of his e-pawn.

W

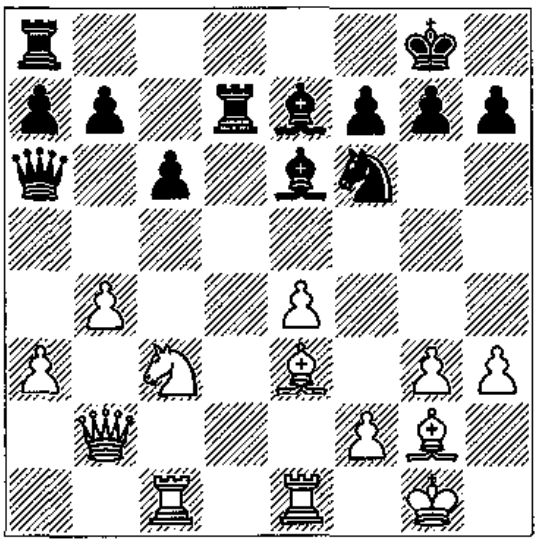


11 ♕b3

11 ♕c2 c6 12 ♖d1 ♕e6 13 e4 0-0 14 ♘c3 ♕e5 15 ♗f4 ♕a5 is also promising for White, Becker-Mozny, Trier 1997.

11...c6 12 ♘c3 0-0 13 e4 ♕e6 14 ♕c2 ♖d8 15 h3 ♕c4 16 ♗e3 ♗e6 17 b3 ♕d3 18 ♕b2 ♗b4 19 ♖ac1 ♖d7 20 a3 ♗e7 21 b4 ♕a6 22 ♖fe1 *(D)*

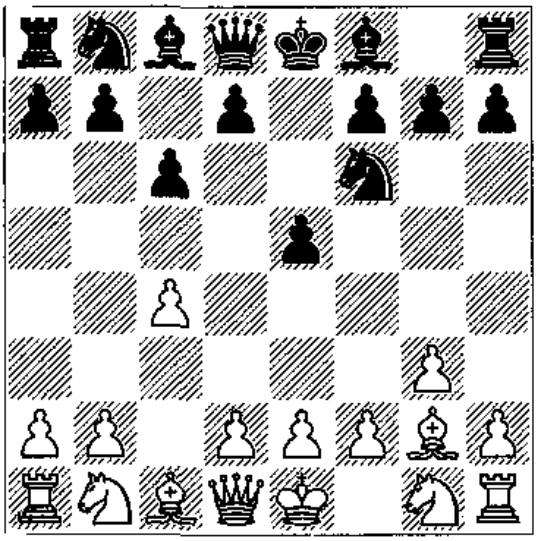
B



Fauland-Marinelli, Budapest 1990. White went on to win a fine attacking game.

6 The Keres System: 2...♘f6 and 3...c6

1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 c6 *(D)*



Keres's move, intending to play ...d5 with a strong pawn centre, is particularly effective against the (more common) move-order 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 g3 c6, as after 4 d4 exd4 5 ♕xd4 d5 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 ♘f3 for instance, the c3-knight proves to be misplaced after 7...♘c6 8 ♕a4 d4!, and this grants Black a strong initiative. Thus, one of the advantages of White's move-order is that he can delay the development of the queen's knight, and instead complete his kingside mobilization, reaching a standard IQP position.

4 d4

Now Black has the following possibilities:

A: 4...exd4	53
B: 4...♗b4+	57
C: 4...d6	58
D: 4...e4	59

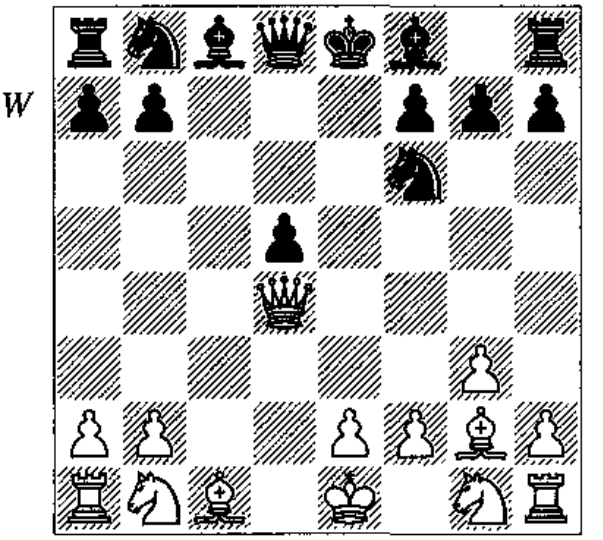
A)

4...exd4 5 ♕xd4 d5 6 cxd5

I think that 6 ♘f3 is less accurate for it allows Black a number of alternatives that avoid suffering an isolated pawn on d5.

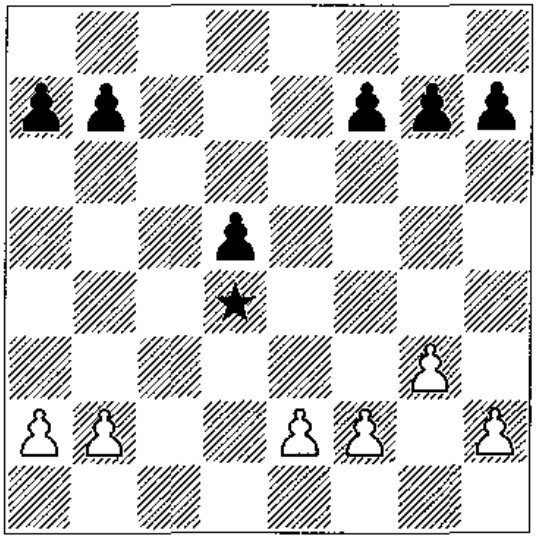
6...cxd5 *(D)*

Attempting to avoid the IQP by 6...♘xd5?! is mistaken, as after 7 ♘f3 ♘b4 8 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9 ♘a3 ♗e7 10 0-0 ♗e6 11 ♗d2 a5 12 ♗c3 f6 13 b3 c5 14 ♘d2 ♘8c6 15 ♘dc4, Black suffers serious problems in the ending, Cebalo-Miles, Biel 1986.



This is the key position in this line. Black has given himself an IQP, hoping that his piece activity will compensate for his structural disadvantage.

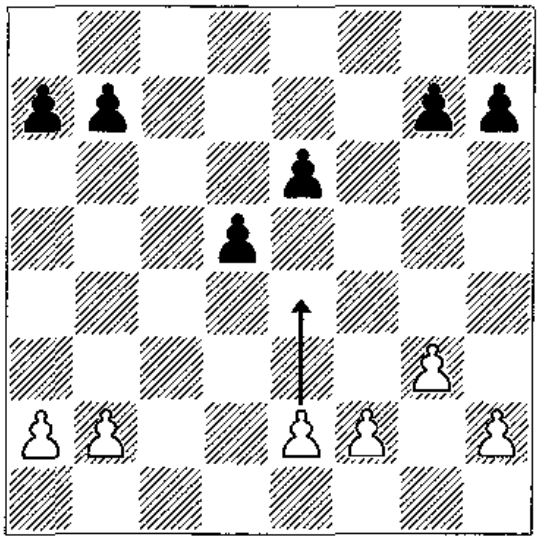
White's strategy against the IQP



This is the typical isolated queen's pawn (or IQP for short) pawn-structure that arises from this, and many other openings. White's most important plan is to control d4, preferably by placing a piece there. A piece established on d4, particularly a knight, will be very influential, and immune from attack by Black's pawns. Having firmly blockaded this pawn, he can then turn his attention to attacking, and ultimately winning, it. This is often not so easy in practice as Black can defend it with several pieces, so White will also attempt to exchange pieces and head for an endgame where the IQP's dynamic qualities, and the good squares for Black's pieces on e4 and c4, are of little value.

Turning the capture on e6 to advantage

Often Black plays his queen's bishop to e6, to support d5. This structure arises when White captures the black bishop on e6 with a knight on d4 or f4.



The black centre can be strong, if White is slow to react. The correct rejoinder is to play a well-timed e2-e4!, with or without ♗h3, when the black centre will start creaking. In fact, White should normally only take on e6 if he has the e4 follow-up ready.

We now return to the specifics of the position at hand (after 1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 c6 4 d4 exd4 5 ♕xd4 d5 6 cxd5 cxd5):

7 ♘f3 ♘c6 8 ♕a4 *(D)*

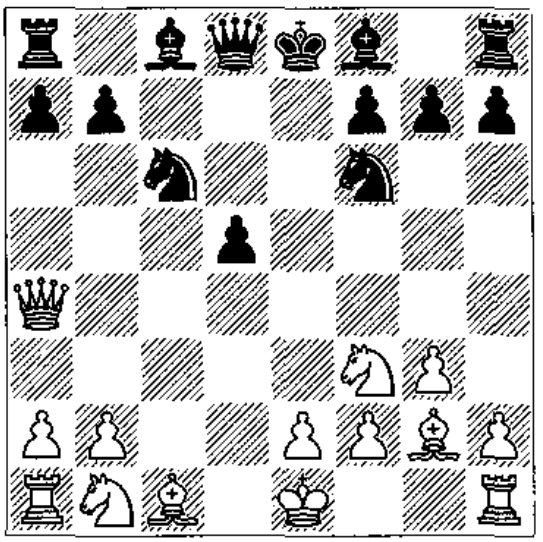
Black can play either:

A1: 8...♗e7 54
A2: 8...♗c5 56
A3: 8...♗b4+ 57

A1)

8...♗e7 9 0-0 0-0

B



Playing 9...♕b6 either now, or a move later, is highly regarded by theory, but after 10 ♘c3 0-0 11 ♕b5 d4 12 ♕xb6 axb6 13 ♘b5 ♖d8 14 ♖d1 ♗c5 15 ♗g5 ♖a5 16 a4 White has done well against three moves:

a) 16...♗f5 17 ♗xf6 gxf6 18 ♘e1 ♗e6 19 ♗e4 ♘b4 20 e3 ♗b3 21 ♖d2 ♖xa4?! 22 ♖xa4 ♗xa4 23 ♘xd4, Romanishin-Polugaevsky, USSR Ch 1974.

b) 16...♗e6 17 ♗d2 ♖aa8 18 ♘c7 ♗b3 19 ♘xa8 ♗xd1 20 ♖xd1 ♖xa8 21 b3, Simić-Tošić, Vrnjačka Banja 1982.

c) 16...♗g4 17 h3 ♗h5 18 g4 ♗g6 19 ♘e1 ♖d7 20 ♗xf6 gxf6 21 ♘d3 ♖a8 22 f4 ♗xd3 23 exd3, Gulko-I.Gurevich, Saint Martin 1993.

White was better in all three cases.

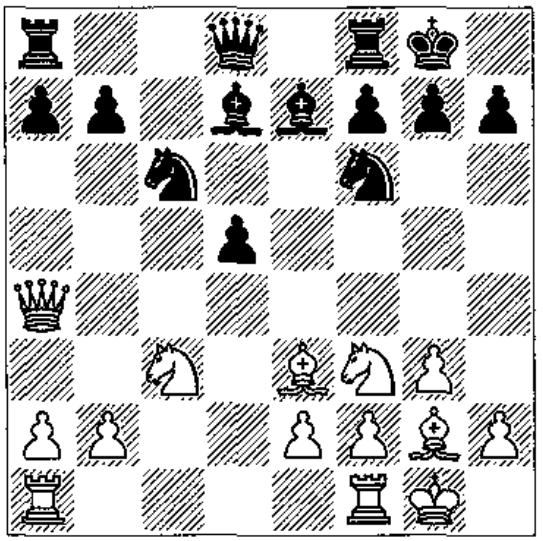
10 ♘c3 ♗d7

This is the main problem with this particular line for White: his queen is a little exposed and may need to wander about before finding a safe haven. Still, his structural plus outweighs this temporary problem in the long run.

If, instead, 10...♗e6 then 11 ♗e3 would be the most thematic move (in Lerner-Berelovich, Berlin 1995, White tried to exploit the pin on the d-file by 11 ♖d1 a6 12 e4!? b5 13 ♕c2 d4 14 ♘d5 ♘xd5 15 exd5 ♘b4 16 ♕b1 ♗xd5 17 ♖xd4 with sharp play) 11...♕d7 12 ♖fd1 h6 13 ♖ac1 a6? 14 ♗b6! ♖ac8 15 ♘e1! ♖fe8 16 ♘d3 ♗d6 and now, instead of the 17 ♘f4?! of Kasparov-Hjartarson, Belfort 1988, when 17...d4 would have been awkward for White, the World Champion should have played 17 ♘c5!, when 17...♕e7 allows the thematic sequence (see page 54) 18 ♘xe6 fxe6 19 e4, with a clear advantage, and 17...♗xc5 18 ♗xc5 hands the dark squares to White.

11 ♗e3! *(D)*

B



Pointing to an important theme for White: he establishes control not only over d4, but also over c5 and b6. Note that the c6-knight is not actually threatening any damage with his 'hop' discovering an attack on the queen, so White continues on his way and waits

to see where the knight will go before deciding where to place his queen.

11...♖c8

After 11...♖e8 12 ♖ad1 ♘b4 13 ♕b3, 13...a5!, threatening ...a4, is a good idea, as this secures the knight's position on b4. 14 a4 (14 ♖d2 a4 15 ♕d1 a3 is also reasonable for Black) 14...♖c8 15 ♗d4 ♗c5 16 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 17 ♘d4 ♕b6 18 e3 gave White only a small edge in Larsen-Yrjölä, Gausdal 1985.

12 ♖ad1 ♘a5 13 ♕c2 a6

The queen has had to retreat, but on the plus side the c6-knight no longer has any hold over the d4-square. Alternatively:

a) 13...♗g4 14 ♘g5 h6 and now, apart from the 15 ♘h3 ♗c5 16 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 17 ♘f4 of Suba-Hübner, Thessaloniki OL 1984, direct attack on the d-pawn by 15 ♘ge4!? was possible.

b) 13...♘c4? is worse, though: 14 ♗d4 ♗e6 15 ♘g5 h6 16 ♗xf6 hxg5 17 ♗xe7 wins.

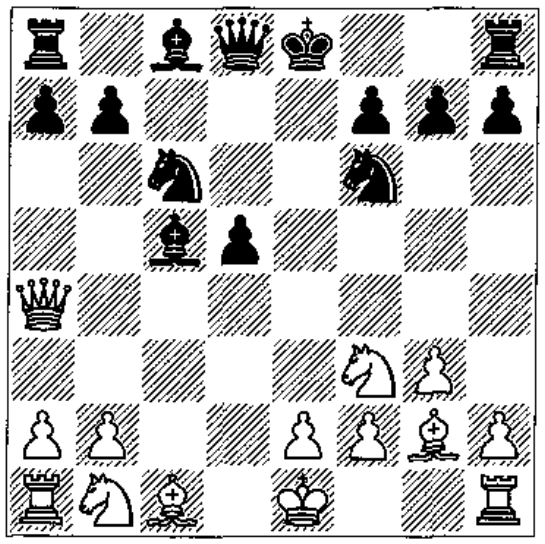
14 ♕b1 ♗e6 15 ♘g5 g6 16 ♗d4 ♗f5 17 ♕a1 ♘c6 18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19 ♖xd5

Winning the hapless d-pawn, Chernin-Adianto, Bastia 1998.

A2)

8...♗c5 *(D)*

This is a more active square for the king's bishop, and does not impede the e-file for the black rook. However, the disadvantage is that, after White's tenth move, the f6-knight, an important defender of the d-pawn, is pinned.



9 0-0 0-0 10 ♗g5 h6

10...♖e8 is also possible, but instead of 11 e3, when Larsen-Chandler, London 1986 continued 11...h6 12 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 13 ♘c3 ♗e6 14 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 15 ♖d2 ♗b6 16 ♖fd1 d4! with Black's thematic break offering him good tactical chances, White can play 11 ♕c2 or even 11 ♕b5, e.g. 11...♗b6 12 ♘c3 d4 13 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 14 ♘d5 with good play.

11 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 12 ♘c3 ♗e6 13 ♘e1!?

This is a typical, and strong, manoeuvre. As control of d4 is problematical, White wishes to open up the g2-bishop's diagonal, and intends to re-deploy the f3-knight to d3, and thence f4, to attack the d5-pawn.

13...♖ad8 14 ♘d3 ♗d4 15 ♖ac1 ♖fe8 16 ♘f4 ♕e5!

Adding further support to the d-pawn. The immediate 16...♗xc3 would allow White to recapture with the rook, 17 ♖xc3, keeping his pawns intact.

17 e3 ♗xc3

Seirawan-I.Sokolov, Wijk aan Zee 1995. Now, as 18 ♖xc3 could be answered by 18...d4!, when 19 ♗xc6 bxc6 20 ♘xe6 ♖xe6 would have been fairly level, White played 18 bxc3, with a small, but certain edge because of the hold over the d4-square.

A3)

8...♗b4+?!

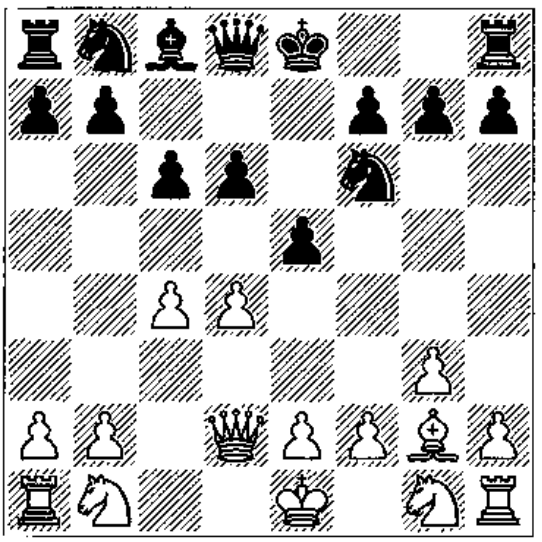
I have never believed lines where Black plays this move, either now, or earlier, as it makes no sense to exchange pieces in IQP positions, and particularly the 'good' bishop.

9 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 10 ♘bxd2 0-0 11 0-0 ♕b6 12 ♕b3 ♕a6 13 e3 h6 14 ♖fc1 ♗e6 15 ♗f1 ♕b6 16 ♕xb6 axb6 17 ♘b3 ♖fc8 18 ♘bd4

Frias-Klovsky, New York 1993. White enjoys an almost 'perfect' IQP endgame.

B)

4...♗b4+ 5 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 6 ♕xd2 d6 *(D)*



This is similar to Line C in terms of pawn-structure, except that the exchange of dark-squared bishops renders this position less disadvantageous for Black. He has more room for his pieces, and can set his pawns on dark squares without fear of cramping the dark-squared bishop (as it is no longer on the board, of course).

7 ♘c3

It did occur to me that 7 e3 might be slightly more accurate, as then 7...0-0 8 ♘e2 ♗e6, as in note 'b' to Black's 8th move, would lose any force, for 9 b3 exd4? could be answered by the simple 10 ♘xd4, and otherwise play will transpose, as soon as White does play ♘c3.

7...0-0 8 e3

This is a common pawn-structure 'type' in the English, as the dark-squared bishops are no longer on the board it makes sense for both sides to place pawns on dark squares.

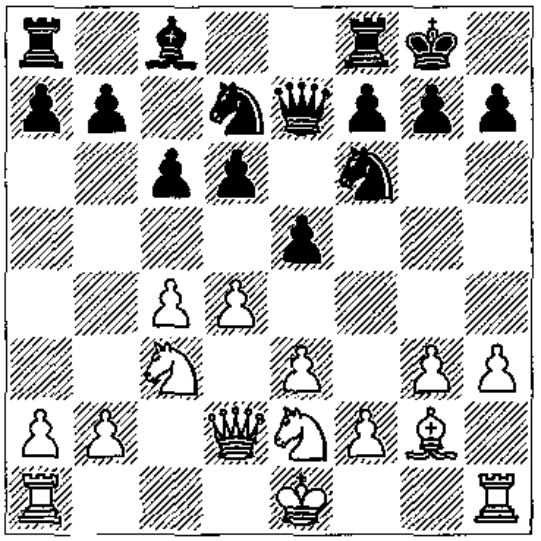
8...♘bd7

Alternatively:

a) 8...♕e7 9 ♘ge2 ♘a6 10 h3 ♖e8 11 0-0 ♗e6 12 b3 ♖ad8 13 ♖ae1 ♗c8 14 g4! h6 15 ♘g3 shows the same plan implemented by White as in the main line, also with advantage, Nogueiras-Illescas, Moscow OL 1994.

b) 8...♗e6!? might be the best move. After 9 b3 exd4, 10 exd4 d5 11 c5 ♖e8 12 ♘ge2 ♕c8 gives Black chances of equality, Lobron-Khuzman, Budapest 1996, but 10 ♕xd4 seems more pertinent (or see the note to move seven).

9 ♘ge2 ♕e7 10 h3! *(D)*



This is the key; rather than simply castling, White prepares g4, which has the dual purpose of dissuading Black from playing e4, as g5 will chase away the defender on f6, and preparing ♘g3-f5. Apart from bringing the (currently passively placed) e2-knight to a powerful square, this also solves the problem of what to do with knights defending each other, as this often reduces the knights' mobility – they cannot both sit on the same square.

10...♖e8 11 g4 ♘b6 12 b3 a5 13 0-0

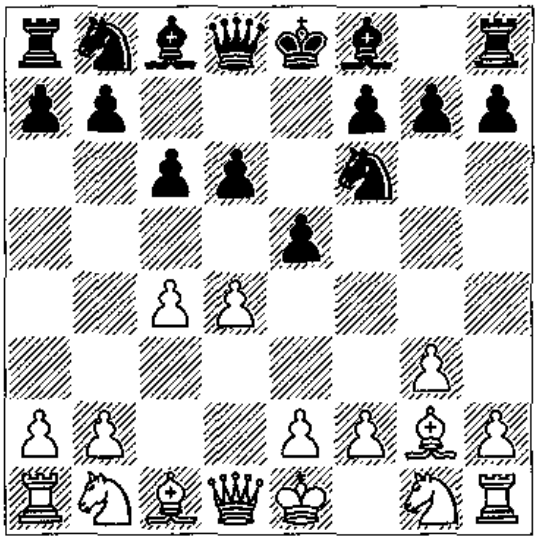
It is time to castle, as Black was aiming to lever open the queenside. Otherwise, White would be able to defer this longer, playing ♘g3 first. Should Black play too passively, and allow White's kingside advance to become too significant, White may even be able to consider castling long.

13...a4 14 ♖ae1 axb3 15 axb3 d5 16 c5 ♘bd7 17 ♘g3 ♘f8 18 g5 ♘6d7 19 f4 e4 20 ♘f5 ♕d8 21 ♘d6

Dorfman-Razuvaev, Burgas 1992. The powerful d6-knight gives White a crushing advantage.

C)

4...d6 *(D)*



This move shuts in the black king's bishop and aims for an Old Indian set-up, but as White has not yet committed his king's knight he can develop it to e2 leaving the f-pawn free to advance.

5 ♘c3

Note that the endings after 5 dxe5 offer White little, as, although the black king is displaced following 5...dxe5 6 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8, the lack of a serious weakness in the black position rather limits White's prospects. If Black has already played ...g6 and ...♗g7, then the endings are more interesting as the black kingside dark squares are weakened.

In the current configuration, it is better to maintain the tension.

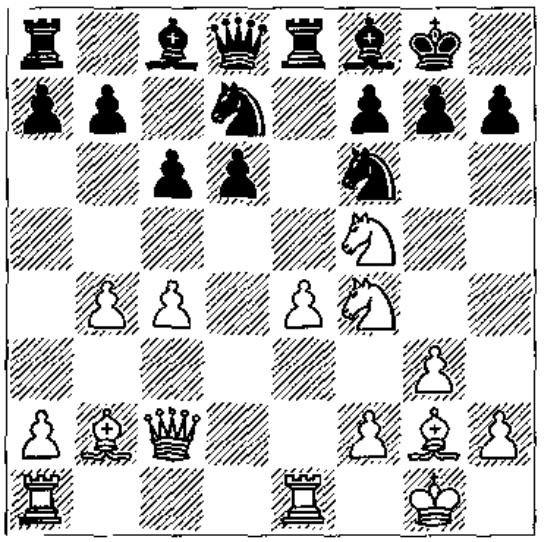
5...♘bd7 6 e3

This is solid and good, but the more aggressive move 6 e4 is also promising, for example: 6...a6 7 ♘ge2 ♗e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 f4 exd4 10 ♘xd4 ♘c5 11 b4, with a very favourable position for White, Kosten-Summerscale, British Ch (Hove) 1997.

6...♗e7 7 ♘ge2 0-0 8 0-0 ♖e8

The prophylactic 8...a5 is similar, and led to a massive space advantage for White after 9 b3 ♘e8 10 e4 ♗f6 11 ♗e3 ♘c7 12 f4 ♘a6 13 ♕d2 h6 14 ♖ad1, in Kosten-Coleman, Port Erin 1997.

9 b3 ♗f8 10 ♕c2 ♕a5 11 ♗b2 exd4 12 ♘xd4 ♕h5 13 ♘ce2 ♕g6 14 e4 ♘c5 15 ♖fe1 ♕h6 16 ♗c1 ♕h5 17 ♘f4 ♕e5 18 ♗b2 ♕e7 19 b4 ♘cd7 20 ♘f5 ♕d8 *(D)*



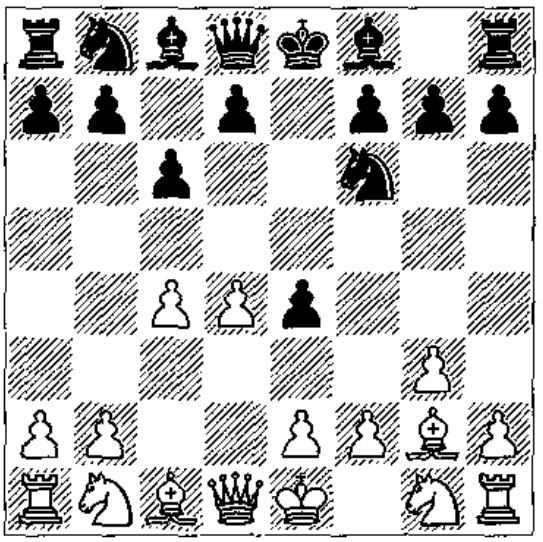
After some jockeying for position, White is ready to deliver the knockout blow:

21 c5! dxc5 22 e5! ♘d5 23 e6 ♘xf4? 24 exf7+ ♔xf7 25 ♘h6+

1-0 Greenfeld-Popchev, Polanica Zdroj 1987.

D)

4...e4 *(D)*



This advance is playable, if not at all popular. The main problem with Black playing such structures (a reversed French) is not only that White has an extra tempo, but also that he can develop his queen's bishop outside the pawn-chain.

5 ♘c3 d5 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 ♗g5

In the French Defence this piece (that is, Black's queen's bishop) would be quite inactive during the opening, as it is trapped behind Black's e6-pawn, but here it can help increase the pressure on Black's centre.

7...♗b4 8 ♖c1 0-0 9 ♘h3 ♘bd7 10 ♕b3 ♗xc3+ 11 ♖xc3

Ragozin-Povah, London Lloyds Bank 1994. White has a significant edge.

7 Other Second Moves for Black

1 c4 e5 2 g3

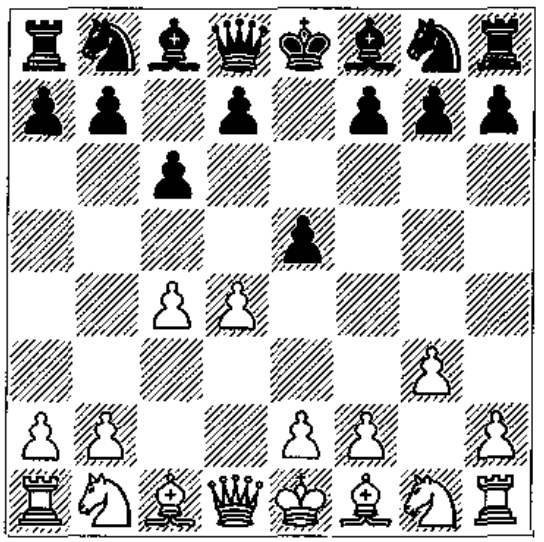
Here we deal with black second moves other than 2...♘f6 and 2...♘c6, which are all quite rare. In most cases, rather than trying to refute these moves (and possibly walking into the opponent's pet system), it is simpler, and more practical, to continue with ♗g2 and ♘c3 before deciding on the subsequent piece set-up.

A: 2...c6 60
B: 2...g6 62
C: 2...f5 62
D: 2...d5 66
E: 2...d6 67

A)

2...c6 3 d4 *(D)*

B



In this case, as soon as Black threatens to play ...d5, it is best to advance d4 immediately, aiming for Chapter 6. Now there is a further divide:

A1: 3...exd4 60
A2: 3...♗b4+ 60
A3: 3...d6 61
A4: 3...e4 61

A1)

3...exd4 4 ♕xd4 d5 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 ♗g2

This last move attacks the d-pawn, and therefore forces transposition into the main-line Keres System after 6...♘f6 7 ♘f3, as gambiting the d-pawn by 6...♘c6 seems completely insufficient, viz. 7 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 8 ♗xd5 ♘d4 9 ♗e4 ♘f6 10 ♗d3, etc.

A2)

3...♗b4+ 4 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 5 ♕xd2 d6 6 ♘c3 ♘f6

6...♘h6!? has been played. Then 7 0-0-0! ♕e7 8 dxe5 dxe5 9 ♘e4!? 0-0 10 ♕d6 gives White a small edge owing to the weakness on d6, Serper-Maliutin, Oberwart 1994.

7 ♗g2

This transposes into Chapter 6, Line B. The reader is advised to avoid the 'combination' 7 dxe5?! dxe5 8 ♕g5 0-0 9 ♕xe5 as 9...♕b6 threatens both b2 and, less obviously, 10...♕xf2+, so 10 ♘d1 is obligatory, whereupon

Black plays 10...♖e8 with a good initiative.

A3)

3...d6

Once again, this is slightly passive, and we reach Line C, Chapter 6, after 4 ♘c3 ♘f6 5 ♗g2 ♘bd7.

A4)

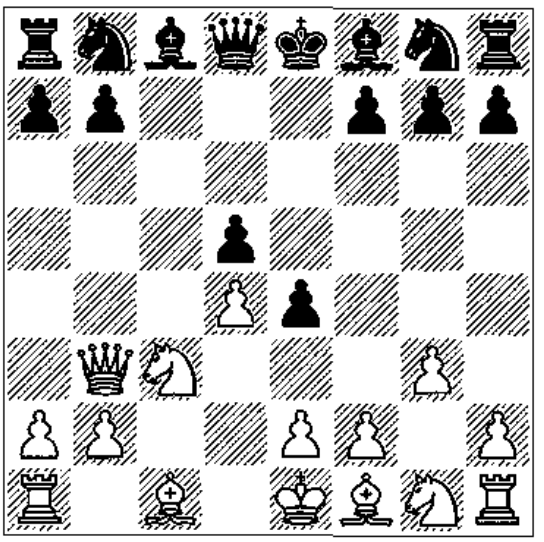
3...e4

This is more pertinent here than after ...♘f6 as Black can avoid developing the king's knight to f6, to avoid the pin ♗g5.

4 ♘c3 d5

4...f5 is very ambitious, and in Suba-Timman, Thessaloniki OL 1984, White decided to counter this by 5 h4, playing a 'reversed Gurgenidze'. This worked out very well after 5...♘f6 6 ♗g5 h6 7 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 8 e3 g6 9 ♘ge2 d6 10 ♘f4 ♘a6 11 g4! ♖g8 12 ♕b3 ♘c7 13 gxf5 gxf5 14 ♗e2, and Black was in trouble. The more straightforward 5 ♗g2 ♘f6 would transpose into my game against I.Sokolov, Hilversum 1993, which continued 6 f3!? ♗b4 7 ♕b3 c5!? – see Line C2 of this chapter for the rest of this game, and for more detail.

5 cxd5 cxd5 6 ♕b3 *(D)*



B

6...♘e7

The remarks of the previous chapter about this structure are still pertinent, except that here, Black is unable to play 6...♘f6? as 7 ♗g5 ♘c6 (or 7...♘bd7 8 ♕b5! a6 9 ♗xf6, also picking up a pawn) 8 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 9 e3 wins a pawn. However, 6...♘c6!? is a reasonable try, hoping for 7 e3, when 7...♘f6 is possible, so White should probably enter the complications: 7 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 8 ♘xd5 ♘xd4 9 ♘c7+ ♔d8 10 ♘xa8 ♘c2+ 11 ♔d1 ♘xa1 12 ♗f4, preparing to retrieve the a8-knight, e.g. 12...♗e6 13 b3 ♘f6 14 ♘c7.

7 ♗f4

The 'bad' 'French' bishop goes active, threatening ♘b5.

7...a6 8 f3!?

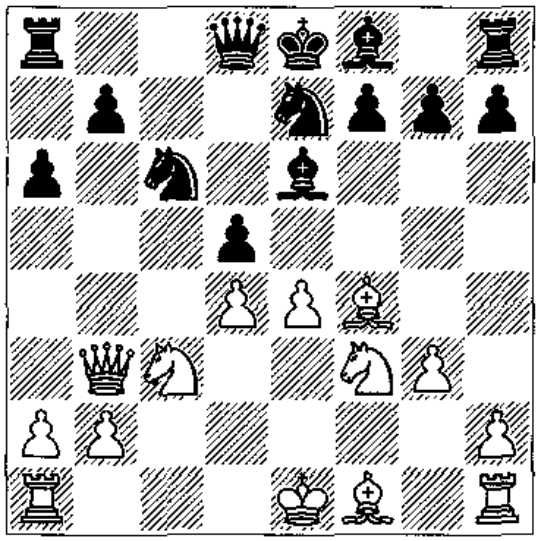
Hitting the black pawn-chain head-on, and looking for quick development. 8 ♗xb8 is the simpler way of playing, e.g. 8...♖xb8 9 e3 ♗e6 10 ♖c1 ♘c6 with a good 'French-style' position, Suba-Ubilava, Roses 1992.

8...exf3

Black has to forget about holding on to his centre as 8...f5 9 ♗xb8 ♖xb8 10 ♘h3 ♗e6 11 fxe4 fxe4 12 ♘f4 ♗f7 13 ♗h3 ♕d6 14 0-0 allows White play along the f-file, and strong pressure on d5.

9 ♘xf3 ♘bc6 10 e4 ♗e6 *(D)*

10...dxe4? 11 ♘g5 ♗e6 12 ♘xe6 fxe6 13 ♕xe6 ♘xd4 14 ♕xe4 is crushing for White, whose bishop-pair controls the board.


W

11 ♖d1 dxe4 12 d5 ♘xd5 13 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 14 ♘xd5 ♗d6 15 ♕xb7 0-0

Black must give up material as 15...♘a5? loses to 16 ♘c7+ ♗xc7 17 ♕xe4+, and if 17...♔d7 then White can play 18 ♗h3+.

16 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 17 ♕xc6! ♕xc6 18 ♘e7+ ♔h8 19 ♘xc6 exf3 20 ♔f2

White's two pieces prove stronger than the rook, Korchnoi-Bacrot, Albert (4) 1997.

B)

2...g6 3 ♗g2 ♗g7 4 ♘c3

This invites transposition into Botvinnik's Variation by 4...♘c6 5 e4, sticking to what we know while allowing Black to go his own way, if he so desires.

4...d6 5 e4 c6 6 d3

Now 6...♘f6 would transpose to Chapter 13.

6...♗e6 7 ♘ge2 ♕c8 8 ♗e3

White follows his normal plan of development.

8...♗h3?! 9 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 10 ♕b3 ♕c8 11 d4 ♘e7 12 ♕a3 ♕c7 13 ♖d1 0-0 14 dxe5 dxe5 15 ♗c5 ♖e8 16 ♗d6 ♕d8 17 ♗xe5

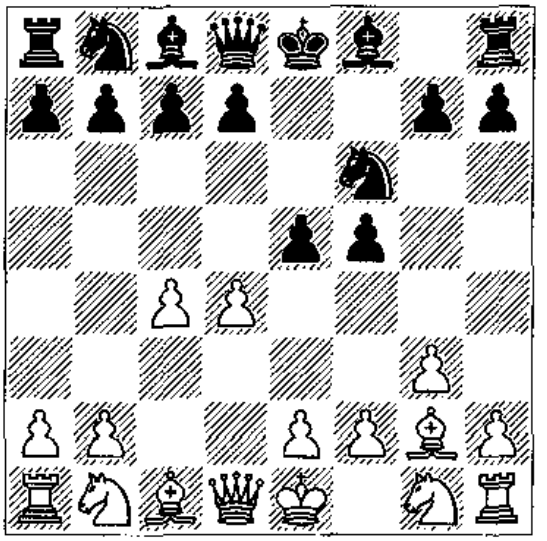
White is winning a pawn, Csom-Nemeth, Hungarian Cht 1992.

C)

2...f5 3 ♗g2 ♘f6

Alternatively, 3...♘c6 4 ♘c3 ♘f6 transposes into Chapter 2.

4 d4! *(D)*

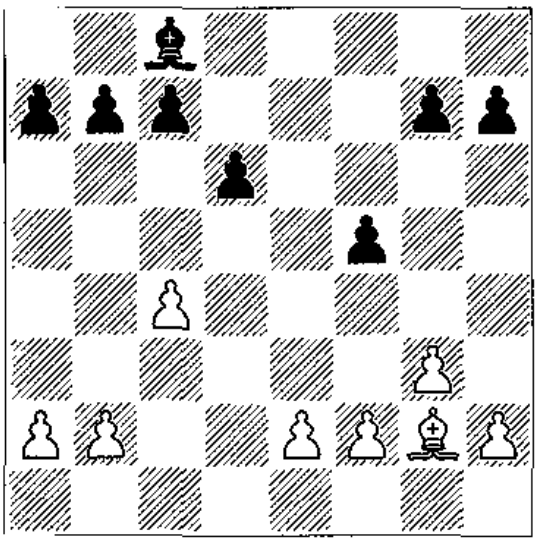

B

White confronts Black's e-pawn head-on. This is the only way to exploit Black's omission of ...♘c6 (4 ♘c3 would be more to Black's liking, as he could reply 4...♗b4, intending to take on c3).

White's strategy

There is a particular pawn-structure that White is heading for, one that arises from various lines where Black

has played ...f5, but which is very advantageous for White:



This position-type often arises when Black plays ...e5 and ...f5, to which White replies d4, and either Black captures on d4, or White takes on e5 when Black is obliged to recapture with a piece. These positions are very pleasant for White. He will continue ♘h3!-f4, b3 and ♗b2, when all his minor pieces will be harmoniously placed, and then ♕d2/c2, ♖fd1 and ♖ac1.

Meanwhile, what can Black do? His queen's bishop is hindered by the f5-pawn and the a2-g8 diagonal is weak. White can make good use of the f4- and d5-squares as Black can only control the former by playing the move ...g5, weakening his already sensitive king position, and the latter by ...c6, leaving the d6-pawn exposed on the open d-file.

We now return to the opening specifics. After 1 c4 e5 2 g3 f5 3 ♗g2 ♘f6 4 d4 Black can choose from:

C1: 4...exd4 63
C2: 4...e4 64
C3: 4...♗b4+ 65
C4: 4...d6 65

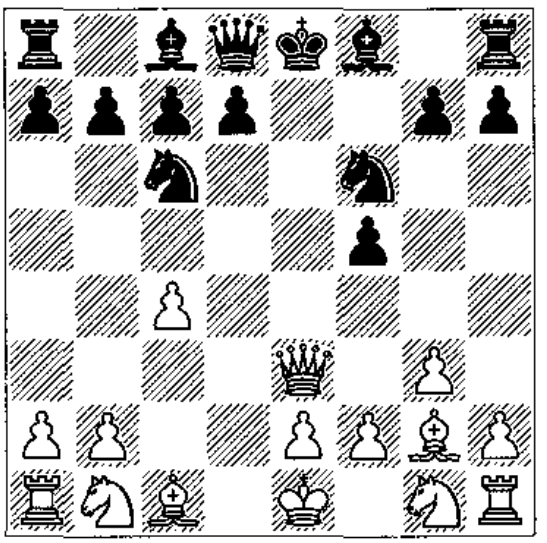
C1)

4...exd4

Planning to gain time attacking the white queen, but White has an ideal structure, and Black's 'initiative' soon peters out.

5 ♕xd4 ♘c6 6 ♕e3+! *(D)*

B



The point, crossing up the black piece placement.

6...♗e7

It is difficult to say which move is best here, but the text-move has been the almost universal choice. Both 6...♔f7 7 ♘f3 ♗b4+ 8 ♗d2 ♖e8 9 ♕d3 ♘e4 10 ♘c3 and 6...♕e7 7 ♘c3 ♕xe3 8 ♗xe3 ♗b4 9 ♗d2 leave White structurally better.

7 ♘c3 0-0 8 ♘h3

The square f4, and thence d5, beckons.

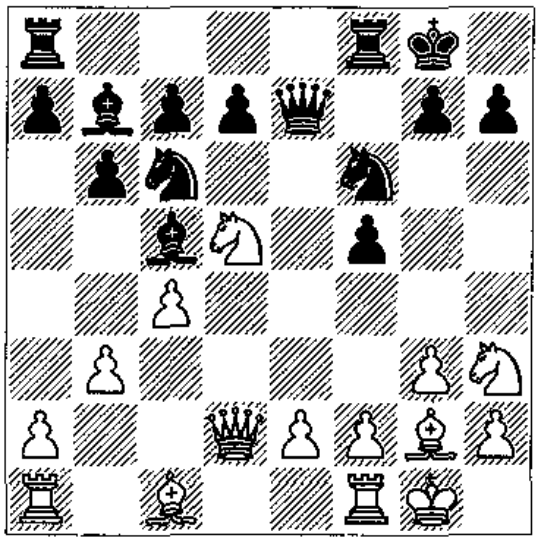
8...b6

Shirov's choice; others:

a) 8...♖e8 9 0-0 ♗b4 10 ♕d3 ♘e5 (10...♗xc3 11 ♕xc3 ♖xe2 12 ♗e3 traps the errant black rook) 11 ♕c2 c6 12 a3 ♗f8 13 b3 d6 14 ♗b2 ♗e6 15 ♘g5 ♕e7 16 ♖ad1 and, positionally speaking, Black is almost lost, Chernin-Bologan, Geneva rpd 1996.

b) 8...d6 9 0-0 ♘e5 10 b3 c6 is similarly pleasant for White, Romero-de la Villa, Leon 1996.

9 0-0 ♗b7 10 b3 ♗c5 11 ♕d2 ♕e7 12 ♘d5 *(D)*



Played to shut out the b7-bishop. Normally, the moves ♗b2, ♘f4 and ♖ad1 would be played, but, in this particular position, the text-move is stronger.

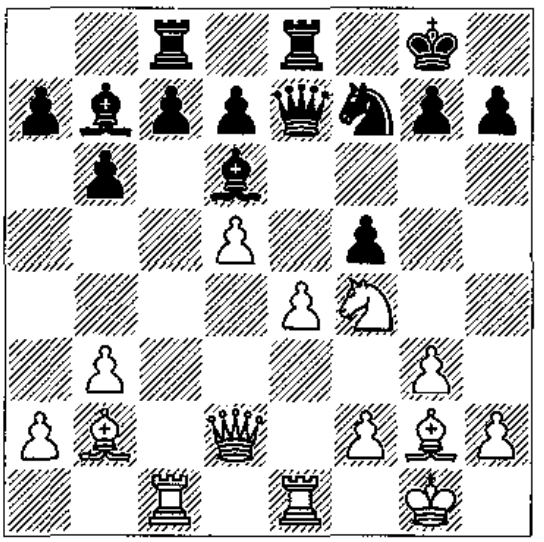
12...♘xd5 13 cxd5 ♘d8

13...♘d4? 14 e3 ♘b5 loses a piece to 15 d6.

14 ♗b2 ♖e8 15 ♘f4 ♗d6 16 ♖ac1

16 ♖ae1!? is an interesting possibility, intending to sacrifice the exchange after 16...♗b4 by 17 ♕c2 ♗xe1 18 ♖xe1 ♕f7 19 e4, e.g. 19...c6 20 ♗f3! cxd5 21 ♗h5 g6 22 ♕c3, winning, due to mate threats on the long diagonal. It is in a variation such as this that we see just what a liability the f-pawn is on f5, rather than on its original square.

16...♘f7 17 ♖fe1 ♖ac8 18 e4 *(D)*



Forcing open the e-file to embarrass the black queen, Gelfand-Shirov, Tilburg 1996.

C2)

4...e4

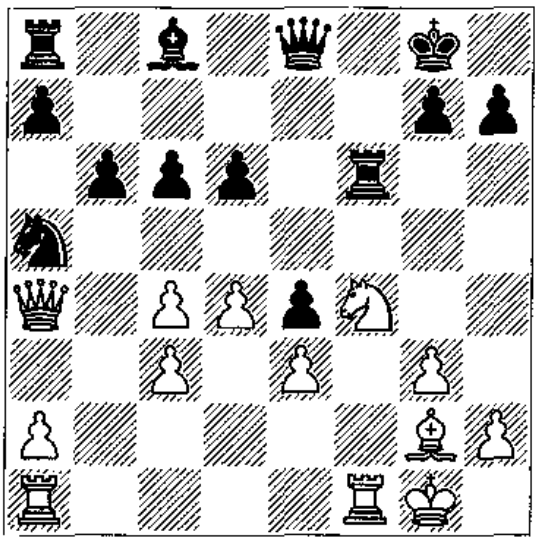
Black aims for a kingside space advantage, but the advanced e-pawn acts as a target for White.

5 ♘c3 c6

Trying to construct a big central clamp. Alternatively:

a) 5...♗b4 6 ♗g5 0-0 7 e3 ♗xc3+ 8 bxc3 d6 9 ♘e2 ♘c6 10 ♘f4 ♕e8 11 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 12 f3 ♘a5 13 fxe4 fxe4 14 0-0 c6 (14...♘xc4) 15 ♕a4 b6 *(D)*.

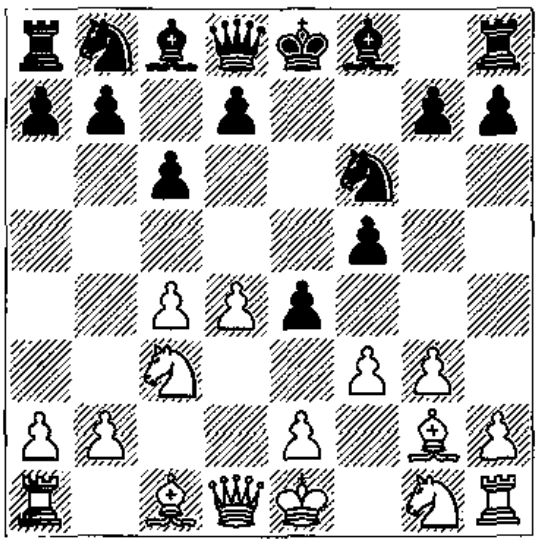
16 ♘d5! ♖xf1+ 17 ♖xf1 ♕d8 18 ♗xe4 ♗h3 19 ♖f4 cxd5 20 ♗xd5+ ♔h8 21 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 22 d5 and, in Sunye-Milos, Rio de Janeiro 1985,



Black did not find enough time to co-ordinate his forces, and lost.

b) 5...♘c6 6 ♘h3 ♗b4 7 0-0 ♗xc3 8 bxc3 0-0 9 f3 b6 10 ♗g5 exf3 11 ♗xf3 ♕e8 12 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 13 ♘f4 d6 14 ♕d3 ♗a6 15 ♘h5 ♖f7 16 ♗d5 and White wins material, Belkhodja-Prié, French Cht 1992.

6 f3 *(D)*

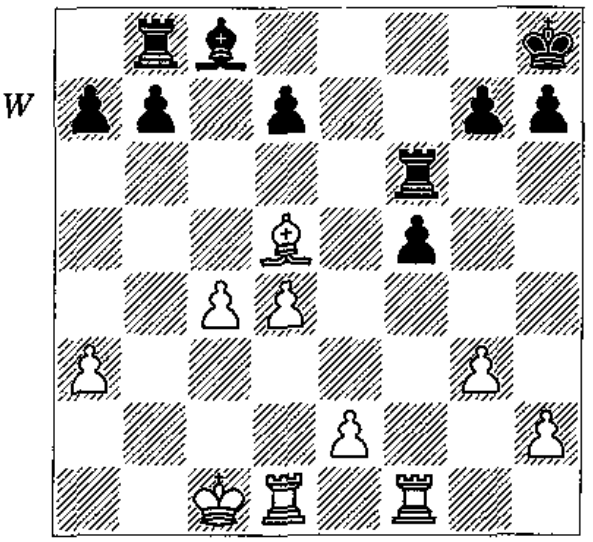


Hitting the e-pawn. White would like Black to take on f3, when, by recapturing with a piece, White will have opened the f-line and the h1-a8 diagonal. 6 ♗g5 is also logical.

6...♗b4 7 ♕b3 c5 8 a3 ♕a5 9 ♗g5 0-0 10 ♗xf6 ♗xc3+ 11 ♕xc3 ♕xc3+ 12 bxc3 exf3 13 ♘xf3 ♖xf6 14 0-0-0! cxd4 15 ♘xd4!

Yes, I know, this is absolutely anti-positional, but it's strong! The activity of the pieces was foremost in my mind.

15...♘c6 16 ♖hf1 ♘xd4 17 cxd4 ♖b8 18 ♗d5+ ♔h8?! *(D)*



19 g4!! fxg4 20 e4

With a violent initiative, Kosten-I.Sokolov, Hilversum 1993.

C3)

4...♗b4+ 5 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 6 ♕xd2 d6 7 ♘c3 0-0 8 e3 c6

With chances of equality, Gulko-Korchnoi, Hastings 1988/9.

C4)

4...d6 5 ♘c3 c6 6 ♘f3!?

Forcing the black e-pawn forward. Even though White loses a couple of tempi on other lines, this still seems good for him.

6...e4 7 ♘g5 d5?! 8 cxd5 cxd5 9 ♘h3!

White is intending ♗g5, ♘f4 and ♕b3, laying siege to d5.

9...♘c6

The line 9...h6 10 ♘f4 ♗b4 11 ♘g6 ♖g8 12 0-0 is very difficult for Black.

10 ♗g5 ♗b4 11 ♘f4 0-0 12 0-0 ♗xc3 13 bxc3 h6 14 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 15 f3 g5?! 16 ♘h5 ♖f7 17 fxe4 fxe4 18 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 19 e3 ♘a5 20 ♕e2 ♗e6 21 ♖f1+ ♔e7 22 ♘g7!

Exposing the black king, Lautier-M.Gurevich, France 1993.

D)

2...d5

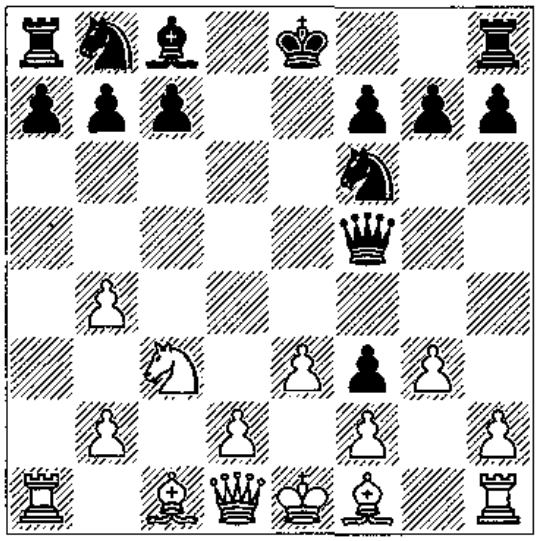
This is not quite as silly as it seems at first sight, and has been played by Maliutin a few times, with some success.

3 cxd5 ♕xd5 4 ♘f3 ♗b4

This is the point; Black tries to assure his queen's presence in the centre of the board, ready to answer 5 ♘c3 with 5...♗xc3 6 bxc3 e4, which is reasonable enough. Occasionally, Black has played other moves, allowing ♘c3, and play has transposed to a sort of 'reversed hyper-accelerated' Dragon, as it were, e.g. 4...♘c6 5 ♘c3 ♕d8 6 ♗g2 ♘f6 7 0-0, which must be favourable to White. Any sensible plan should be enough for an advantage, but a quick attack on the e5-pawn seems the most precise: d3 and a3, b4, ♗b2, for instance.

5 a3 e4 6 axb4 exf3 7 e3 ♘f6 8 ♘c3 ♕f5 *(D)*

8...♕h5 amounts to the same thing.



9 ♖a5 ♕g4 10 b5

A strong move, threatening 11 ♖a4 ♕h5 12 ♖h4, embarrassing the black queen, and picking up the f3-pawn at some stage. I should perhaps alert the reader's attention to the tricky move 10 ♖e5+!?, when 10...♗e6 11 d4 0-0 is forced, as the careless 11...♘bd7? loses the queen to 12 h3 ♕g6 13 ♗d3 as in Suba-Van Houtte, Antwerp 1996, which did not last much longer. What difference does 11...0-0 make, you might ask? Well, after 12 h3 ♕g6 13 ♗d3, now Black has the 'lucky' resource 13...♗b3, when 14 ♗xg6 ♗xd1 15 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 16 ♔xd1 ♘c6 17 ♖f5 ♘xb4 18 ♖xf3 c5 offered him reasonable drawing chances in the game Vaulin-Landenbergue, Harkany 1993. Anyway, I would certainly be tempted to play this in a quick game!

10...♕h5 11 ♕a4 b6 12 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 13 ♕xa7 ♘bd7 14 ♕xc7 0-0 15 d4

Dzhandzhgava-Maliutin, USSR jr Cht (Kramatorsk) 1989. This position

must be winning for White, with a bit of care, although he actually went on to lose the game.

E)

2...d6 3 ♗g2

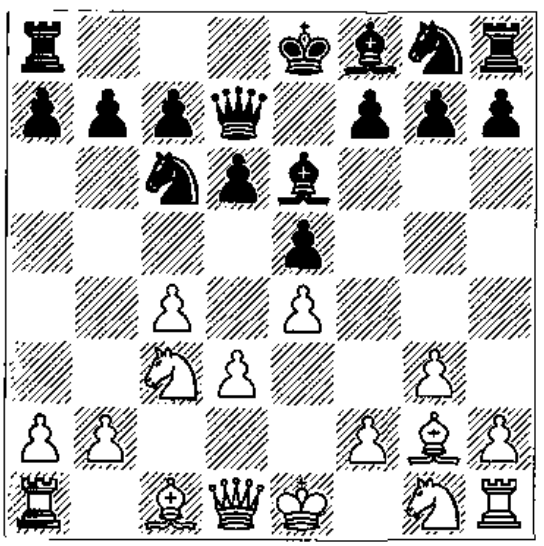
White is, once again, happy to transpose into another variation, e.g. 3...g6 4 ♘c3 ♗g7 5 e4, but there is one other important idea, i.e. Smyslov's system, which involves Black playing ...♗e6 and ...♕d7, intending ...♗h3.

3...♘c6

3...f5 is crying out for the reply 4 d4, when 4...♘c6 (4...exd4 5 ♕xd4 ♘c6 6 ♕e3+ is similar to Line C, and if 4...♗e7, then 5 ♘c3 ♘f6 6 e3 0-0 7 ♘ge2 followed by 0-0, and b4-b5 or h3 promises White the most) 5 dxe5 dxe5 (5...♘xe5 allows White to play 6 ♘h3, ♘f4, 0-0, etc., with similar play to Line C) 6 ♗xc6+! bxc6 7 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 8 ♘f3 e4 9 ♘e5 ♔e8 10 ♘xc6 wins a pawn, Makarov-Ilinsky, Novgorod 1995.

4 ♘c3 ♗e6 5 d3 ♕d7 6 e4 *(D)*

B



Once again, the simplest idea is to transpose into something we understand well (Botvinnik's set-up). If Black wants to swap off White's g2-bishop, fine, let him. White's pawns are on light squares, Black's on dark, so Black will leave himself with his lesser piece against White's better one.

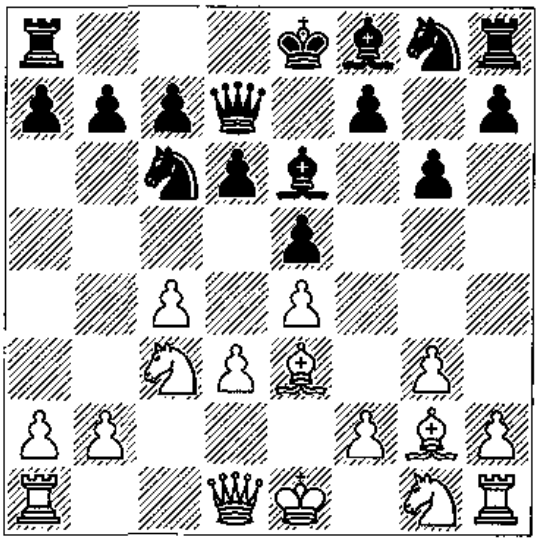
6...g6

Black's best plan is to transpose into the main line of Botvinnik's System (Chapter 1) by the 6...♘ge7 7 ♗e3 f5 8 ♘ge2 g6 9 ♘d5 ♗g7 10 ♕d2 0-0 11 0-0 of Larsen-Ljubojević, Palma de Mallorca 1971.

7 ♗e3 *(D)*

White just has to take a little care. If first 7 ♘ge2 then Black might be tempted into playing 7...♗h3, and if 8 0-0, then perhaps 8...h5 and ...0-0-0, although, even here, White's resources should be more than sufficient to see off the, rather crude, attack.

B



7...♗g7

7...0-0-0?! would be very risky here, because White's traditional queenside

attack of 8 ♘d5, 9 b4, b5, ♕a4, etc., is always fast, but this time the black king serves as a target.

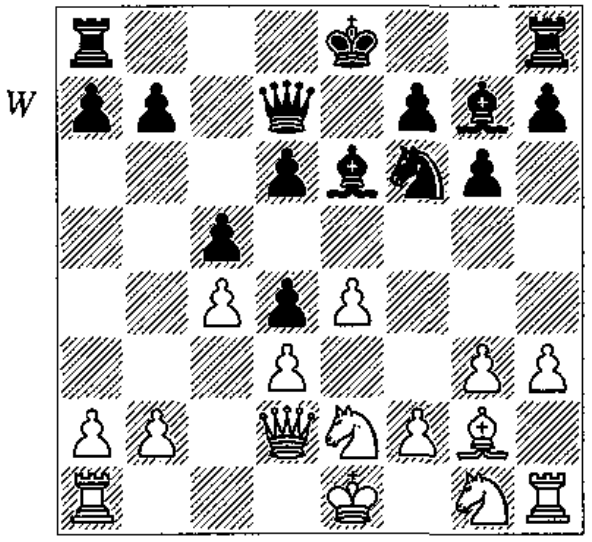
8 ♕d2 ♘f6?!

Black plays superficially. There is an immediate threat of ...♘g4, but once that is dealt with, the knight turns out to be misplaced, obstructing the f-pawn. 8...♘ge7 9 ♘d5 f5 10 ♘e2 0-0 11 0-0 again transposes to Chapter 1.

9 h3 ♘d4

For tactical reasons this logical move turns out to be faulty.

10 ♗xd4! exd4 11 ♘ce2 c5 *(D)*



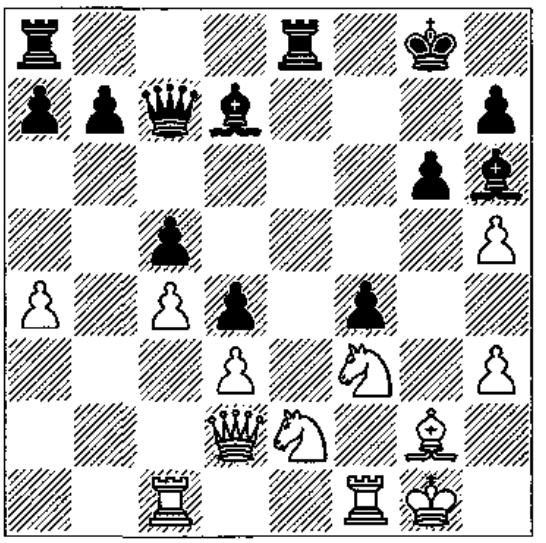
12 b4!

In the style of Petrosian, White creates a mobile kingside pawn-chain by deflecting the d6-pawn from control of the e5-square.

12...0-0 13 bxc5 dxc5 14 a4 ♕c7 15 f4 ♖fe8 16 ♖c1 ♗d7 17 e5 ♘h5 18 ♘f3 f6?!

Black prefers to sacrifice a piece rather than grovel with 18...♗f8 19 g4 ♘g7.

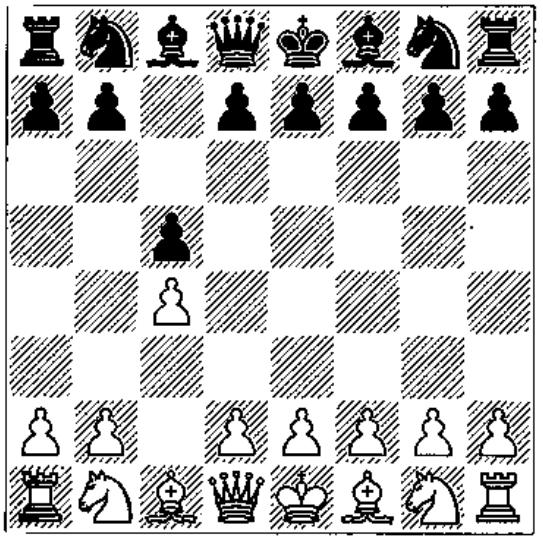
19 g4 fxe5 20 gxh5 exf4 21 0-0 ♗h6 *(D)*



Black's compensation proved quite insufficient in Laco-Striković, Forli 1988.

Part 2: Symmetry: 1...c5

1 c4 c5 *(D)*



Although this move was considered a little too passive for a long time, it is nowadays deemed one of Black's best replies, particularly since the popularization of the Hedgehog and similar structures. You are likely to be faced with it in about 12% of your games.

2 g3

Once again I propose this slightly unusual move. I find it odd that this perfectly logical, and completely thematic, 'English' move only merits one line in *ECO A*. Presumably the thinking is that it will transpose into another line sooner or later. It is true that, in practice, White normally prefers 2 ♘f3 or 2 ♘c3, but the text-move offers the important benefit of avoiding the Hedgehog Variation, and this normally leaves fans of this set-up at something of a loss to know how to play.

Black's next move represents a key split:

A: 2...g6

B: 2...♘f6

Another method of reaching the Symmetrical Variation, Chapter 8, apart from 2...g6 (Line A) is by 2...♘c6 3 ♗g2 g6 (3...♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6 brings us to Line B of this section) 4 ♘c3 ♗g7.

If 2...e6 3 ♗g2 then 3...♘f6 or 3...♘c6 will transpose into Line B, and 3...d5 4 ♘f3 likewise, unless Black plays 4...dxc4?!, when 5 ♘a3 and ♘xc4 is good for White (compare this with note 'd' to Black's sixth move in Chapter 15, for example), or 4...d4, which can lead to a reversed Benoni after 5 e3 or 5 0-0, or a reversed Benko Gambit on 5 b4. Otherwise, White can try 4 cxd5 exd5 5 d3 (rather than 5 d4 cxd4 6 ♘f3 ♗b4+ 7 ♘bd2 d3 8 exd3 ♕e7+, which is only equal), when after 5...♘c6 6 ♘c3 ♘f6 7 ♗g5 ♗e7 8 ♘h3 d4 9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 ♘e4, 10...♗xh3? 11 ♗xh3 ♗e7 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♖c1 b6 14 ♕a4 ♘a5 15 a3 gave White a considerable advantage in Seirawan-Gligorić, Lone Pine 1979, but 10...♗e7 is a better bet.

A)

2...g6 3 ♗g2 ♗g7

Obviously, Black could just as easily invert his moves and play 3...♘c6 here, but, having played ...g6, then he will certainly continue with ...♗g7 before long. Should he play an early ...e5, heading for a Botvinnik set-up, then the reader is referred to Chapter 8, Line C.

4 ♘c3 ♘c6

Reaching Chapter 8, the Symmetrical Variation. 4...♘f6 5 a3 will also transpose into Chapter 8, Line F, but White has another possibility, if he prefers, which is covered in Chapter 13, Line B, note to Black's 5th move.

B)

2...♘f6 3 ♗g2 e6

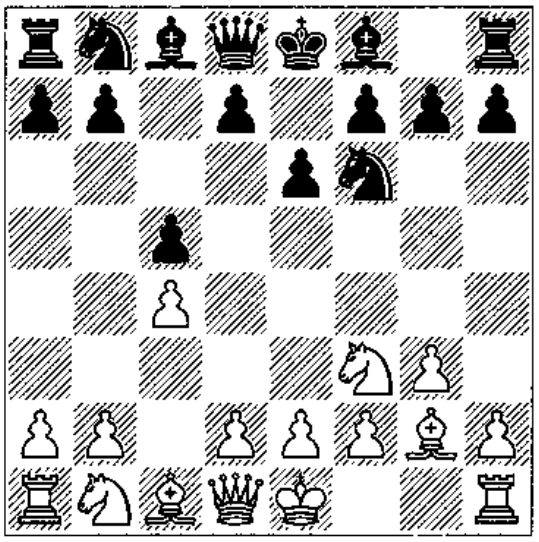
Black either intends to play classically, with ...d5, or is hoping to play a Hedgehog, but this will prove impossible. The most important alternative is 3...d5, when 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 ♘c3 is the Rubinstein System, Chapter 9.

3...♘c6 is sensible, but after 4 ♘c3 Black will have to play 4...e6 if he wants to continue ...d5, and then 5 ♘f3 d5 6 cxd5 transposes to Chapter 10. 4...g6 is possible, of course, when 5 a3 ♗g7 6 ♖b1 brings us to Chapter 8.

4 ♘f3! *(D)*

This is a good reaction whenever Black can play ...d5 (and recapture with a pawn), as it is important that White is able to capture on d5, and if then ...exd5, play d4 and head for a Tarrasch-style position. To give an example, if 4 ♘c3?! then 4...d5 5 cxd5 exd5 is awkward, since 6...d4, displacing White's knight, is a tricky threat, and if 6 d4 then 6...cxd4 7 ♕xd4 ♘c6 leads to a variation of the Keres System (Chapter 6) that we want to avoid, as Black can continue forcefully with ...d4.

B



4...a6

This funny idea has caught on recently. Black wishes to play ...b5 and ...♗b7.

a) 4...d5 is the main line, and is dealt with in Chapter 9, the Keres-Parma Variation.

b) 4...♘c6 5 0-0 and now 5...d5 6 cxd5 ♘xd5 also transposes to Chapter 9, as, after 5...♗e7 6 ♘c3, does 6...d5 7 cxd5, and 6...0-0 7 d4 is also going to transpose, providing Black plays 7...d5 8 cxd5 ♘xd5. Otherwise, 7...cxd4 8 ♘xd4 a6 9 ♗f4 is rather difficult for Black.

c) Note that the attempt to play a Hedgehog by 4...b6 fails to 5 d4 (or 5

♘e5 d5 6 ♕a4+ ♘bd7 7 ♘c3 {7 ♘c6!? ♕c7 8 ♘c3} 7...♗b7 8 0-0 with strong pressure) and now:

c1) 5...cxd4 6 ♘xd4 d5 7 ♘c3 ♗b7 8 ♗g5 ♗e7 9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 cxd5 0-0 11 0-0 ♘a6 12 ♘db5 (12 e4) 12...exd5 13 ♖b1 ♗xc3 14 ♘xc3 ♘c7 15 ♕a4 ♕c7 16 ♖fd1 with a considerable advantage, Østenstad-Magnusson, Gausdal 1990.

c2) 5...♗b7 transposes to a line of the Queen's Indian that is known to be inferior: 6 d5! exd5 7 ♘h4 g6 (7...b5 8 0-0 bxc4 9 ♘c3 ♗e7 10 ♘f5 0-0 11 ♘xe7+! ♕xe7 12 ♗g5 h6 13 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 14 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 15 ♕xd5 ♘c6 16 ♕xc4 ♕xb2 17 e3 with an edge for White, Karpov-Gavrikov, USSR Ch (Moscow) 1988) 8 ♘c3 ♗g7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♗g5 ♕c7 (10...d6 11 ♘xd5 ♘c6 12 ♕d2 ♖b8 13 ♖ad1 ♘d4 14 b3 b5 15 e3 ♘e6 16 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 17 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 18 cxb5! d5 19 f4 with advantage, Kragelj-Gostiša, Slovenian Ch 1996) 11 ♗f4 ♕c8 12 cxd5 ♘e8 13 ♖c1 d6 14 a3 ♘d7 15 b4 a6 16 ♘e4, and White enjoys a clear edge in this Benoni-type position, Tal-Ljubojević, Riga IZ 1979.

5 0-0 b5

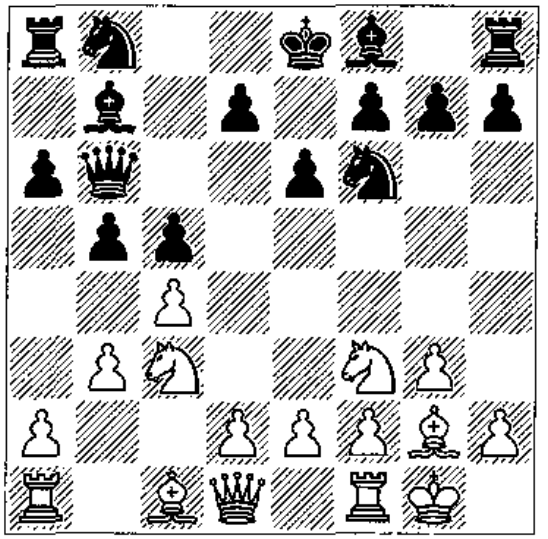
I suppose Black can aim for an inferior Hedgehog now, by 5...b6 6 d4 cxd4 (6...♗b7?! 7 d5 exd5 8 ♘h4) 7 ♘xd4 as he now has the move 7...♖a7 available, but it looks awful.

6 b3

6 ♘e5 can now be answered by 6...♖a7.

6...♗b7 7 ♘c3 ♕b6 *(D)*

7...b4 can be met by 8 ♘a4 d6 9 a3 bxa3 10 ♗xa3 ♕c7 11 d4 ♘bd7 12 ♖c1 ♗e7 13 e3 0-0 (Magerramov-Plachetka, Trnava 1981) 14 b4.



8 e3

Preparing to play ♕e2 and ♖d1 followed by d4. White avoids putting his bishop on b2 for the moment since, if Black ever captures on c4, White will prefer playing along the b-file with ♖b1.

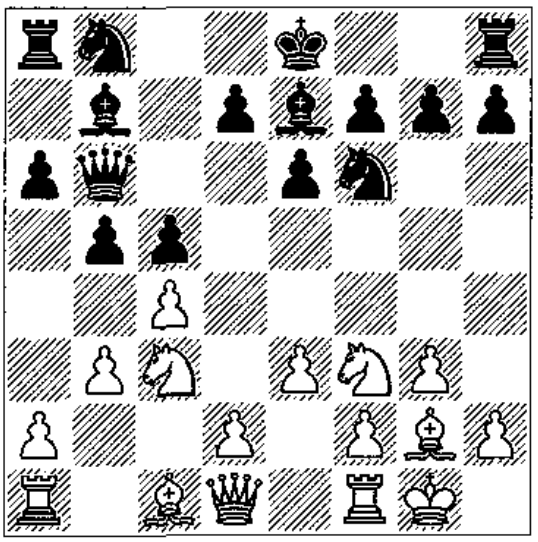
8...♗e7 *(D)*

Otherwise:

a) 8...d6 9 ♕e2 b4 10 ♘a4 ♕c7 11 d4 ♗e7 12 ♗b2 ♘bd7 13 ♖fd1 0-0 14 dxc5 with a freer game for White, Van der Sterren-P.Nikolić, Wijk aan Zee 1988.

b) 8...d5!? 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♗b2 (10 d4 ♘bd7 11 ♘e5 would be a little better for White) 10...♘bd7 11 ♖c1 (11 ♘h4!?) 11...♗e7 12 d3 0-0 13 ♘e2 ♖fe8 and now, rather than 14 ♖c2, Ribli-Korchnoi, Barcelona 1989, 14 h3! is the right move, intending g4 and ♘g3.

W



9 ♕e2 0-0

9...♘e4!? 10 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 11 ♗b2 bxc4 12 ♕xc4 (12 ♗xg7!? ♖g8 13 ♗c3 ♗d3 14 ♕d1 ♗xf1 15 ♔xf1 is most unclear) 12...♕b7 13 ♘e1 ♗xg2 14 ♘xg2 0-0 15 ♕g4 f6 and now, rather than 16 ♖ad1, P.Schlosser-Aseev, Brno 1991, targeting the c-pawn by 16 ♖fc1!? and ♘f4-d3 is the most accurate plan.

10 ♖d1 ♘e4 11 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 12 d3 ♗f6 13 ♗b2 ♗xb2 14 ♕xb2 ♗c6 15 ♖ac1 d6

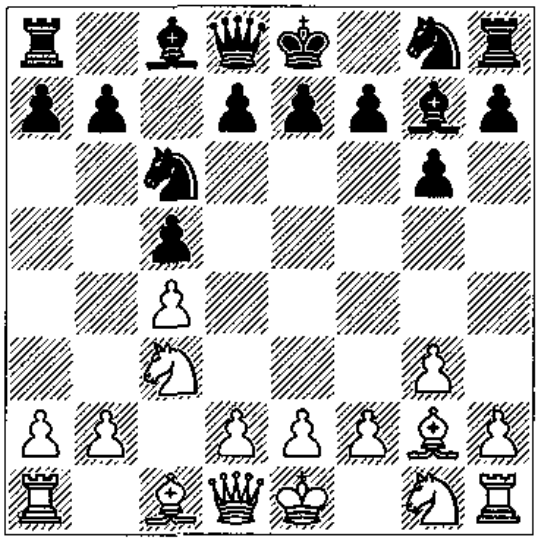
White's forces are completely mobilized, and so he is able to force a favourable conversion of the pawn-structure.

16 d4! bxc4 17 dxc5 ♕b7 18 ♘e1 ♗xg2 19 ♘xg2 d5 20 e4!

Destroying the black centre and winning material, Andersson-Arnason, Haninge 1989.

8 The Symmetrical Variation: ...g6 and ...♘c6

1 c4 c5 2 g3 g6 3 ♗g2 ♗g7 4 ♘c3 ♘c6 *(D)*

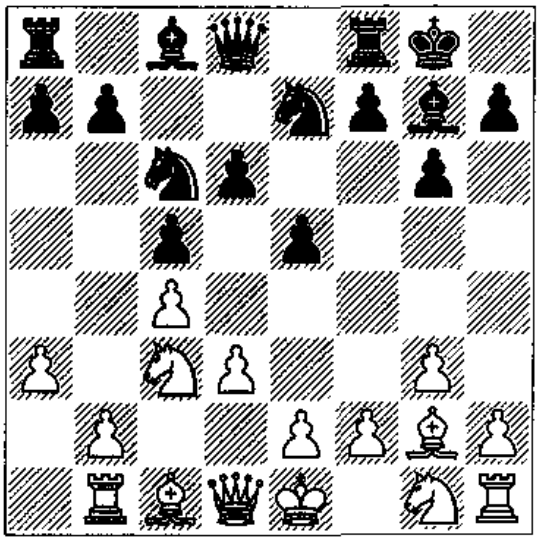


W

At first sight the Symmetrical Variation may appear to be an unambitious choice for Black. Indeed, no matter how White plays, Black can follow him for a number of moves and this leads to several of the dullest lines in the English. However, many players play this line to win as Black, and figure that they will first see how White deploys his forces, before deciding on the appropriate reaction, breaking the symmetry when most appropriate. Similarly, White's task is to make useful moves, while remaining ready to exploit any attempt by Black to break the symmetry.

White's strategy when Black plays a Botvinnik set-up

In several of the sections in this chapter, Black resorts to playing a Botvinnik formation. Although I like this for White when Black has played ...e5, blocking the g7-bishop's diagonal, I like it less when the long diagonal is still open. Still, it is not a bad equalizing try.

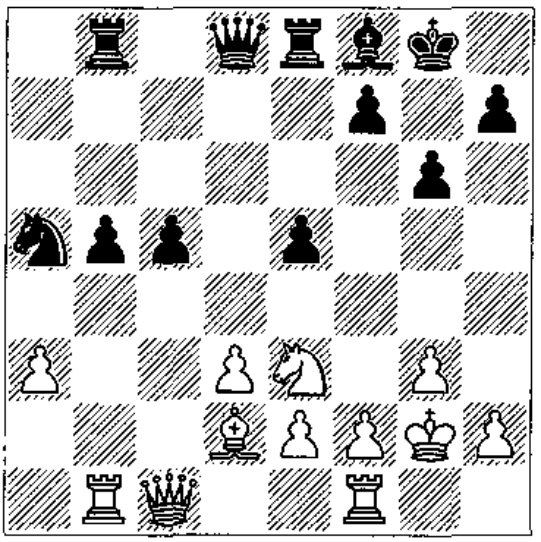


White should try to keep d5 well-controlled, for if Black manages to play ...d5 successfully, he will have equalized, at the very least. White will normally play his king's knight to f3,

castle and then bring the knight to e1, and thence to c2. From this square the knight can be brought to e3 (where it will be ready to hop to d5), or it can help prepare the b4 break. White will also play ♖b1 and a3 to prepare this move which, once played, will threaten to open the b-file and so endanger the health of the black b-pawn.

Good knight, bad bishop

One of the problems for Black is the possibility of finding himself left with a poor bishop on g7, especially against a knight on d5 or e4.



Evans – Karpov
San Antonio 1972

White played **20 ♗xa5 ♕xa5 21 ♘d5 ♖e6 22 e4** establishing the knight on the powerful outpost d5. In this particular example, Black's superior pawn-structure, and the weakness of White's a3-pawn, meant that Black could hold out. Otherwise, he would be worse.

The fight for d5

A key idea that crops up again and again, is White's desire to swap his queen's bishop for the black king's knight. This is done (as above) in order to gain complete control of the d5-square, with the hope of an eventual 'good knight versus bad bishop' position. Here is an example:

Kosten – Pira
Montpellier 1996

1 c4 c5 2 g3 ♘c6 3 ♗g2 g6 4 ♘c3 ♗g7 5 a3 e5?!

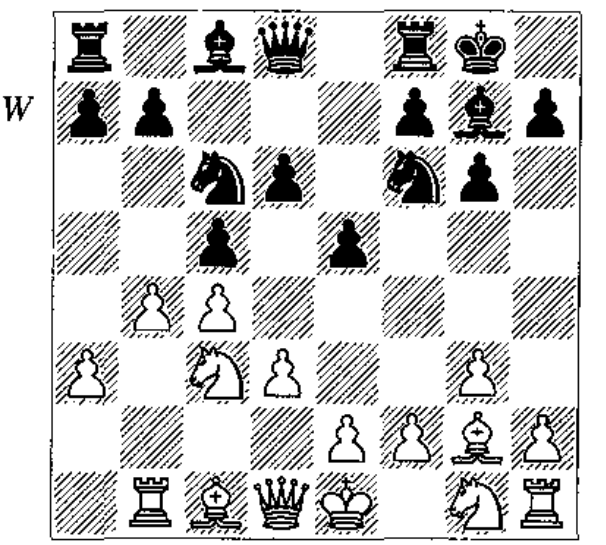
See Line C.

6 b4! d6 7 ♖b1 ♘f6?!

This is a mistake. Black has to play 7...♘ge7 so that after 8 d3 0-0 9 ♗g5 he can reply with 9...f6, keeping a hold on d5.

8 d3 0-0?! *(D)*

Naturally, knowing that the threat is ♗g5, Black should at least play 8...h6. Now events are taken out of his hands.



9 ♗g5! h6 10 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 11 ♘f3 b6 12 ♘d2 cxb4 13 axb4 ♗b7 14 0-0 ♕d7 15 ♕a4 ♖fc8 16 ♘d5 ♗e7

Black is in big trouble on the light squares. He will never be able to contest White's control of d5, and his e7-bishop will stay a sorry piece.

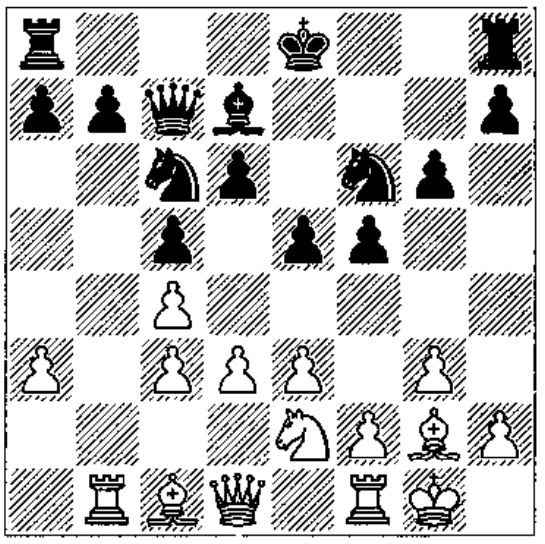
Black captures on c3

Occasionally, when White plays e3, Black captures on c3, as in a Nimzo-Indian Defence. He obviously judges that after ...♗xc3, bxc3 f5 he can keep the white queen's bishop restrained (the e3-pawn gets in its way). This idea of Larsen's has been employed by players such as Andersson, and Miles (against me!).

I think that the best way to counter this idea is to place the white pawns on light squares. This is, of course, standard practice when one owns the bishop-pair, for it is imperative to exploit the bishop that the opponent does not have, in this case the c1-bishop, and the only way to do this is by moving the d- and e-pawns forward onto light squares. Therefore, the plan d3, f3 and e4 suggests itself. Here is an example:

Kosten – Holzke
Berlin 1996

1 c4 c5 2 g3 g6 3 ♗g2 ♗g7 4 ♘c3 ♘c6 5 a3 d6 6 ♖b1 ♗d7 7 e3 ♗xc3 8 bxc3 ♕c7 9 ♘e2 e5 10 0-0 f5 11 d3 ♘f6 *(D)*



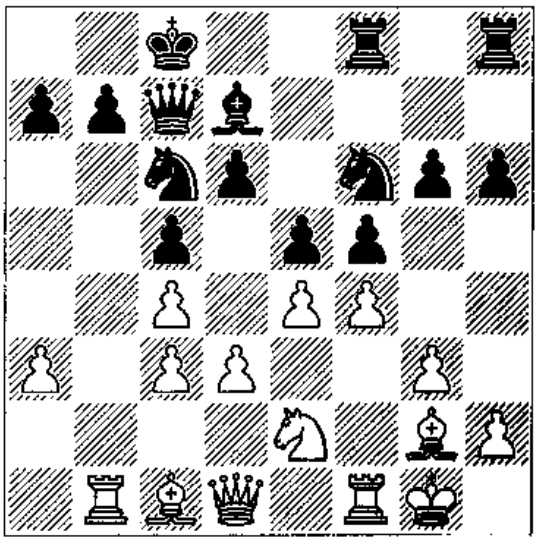
A typical position. White sets his plan in motion.

12 f3! 0-0-0 13 e4 h6 14 f4

Now it is time to open the position for the two white bishops. Note that, unlike the Nimzo-Indian, in this case the white c4-pawn is securely defended.

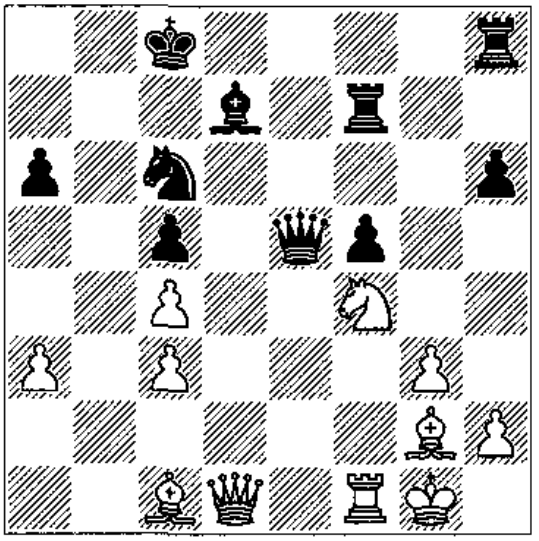
14...♖df8 *(D)*

If 14...fxe4 then White has the beautiful, and thematic, tactical sequence 15 fxe5 dxe5 16 ♖xf6 exd3 17 ♘f4! exf4 18 ♗xf4 ♕a5 19 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 20 ♖xc6+ forcing mate.



15 exf5 gxf5 16 fxe5 dxe5 17 d4 ♖e8 18 ♖b5 a6 19 ♖xc5 b6 20 dxe5 bxc5 21 exf6 ♕e5 22 f7 ♖e7 23 ♘f4 ♖xf7 *(D)*

W



24 ♘d5!

This is even stronger than 24 ♘g6.

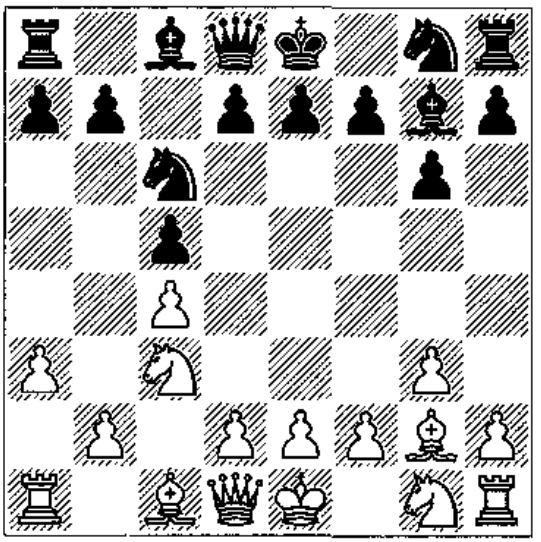
24...♕b8 25 ♗f4 ♕b2 26 ♕d3 ♖e8 27 ♖b1 ♕e2 28 ♘b6+ ♔d8 29 ♕d6 1-0

The Theory of the Symmetrical Variation with ...g6 and ...♘c6

1 c4 c5 2 g3 g6 3 ♗g2 ♗g7 4 ♘c3 ♘c6 5 a3 *(D)*

This little move, preparing b4, appears innocuous, but can be extremely venomous. Many English specialists, like Seirawan and Miles, have employed it to great effect. White simply prepares queenside expansion with b4, and thereby attempts to emphasize the influence of his g2-bishop. Should Black be required to capture on b4 at some point, White will enjoy the better pawn-structure (one island as against Black's two) and the open a-file.

B



It is hardly surprising that Black has a large number of possible replies:

A: 5...a6 76
B: 5...e6?! 81
C: 5...e5?! 83
D: 5...a5?! 85
E: 5...d6 88
F: 5...♘f6 90
G: 5...b6 92
H: 5...♘h6 92

Line A attempts a copying strategy, while B and C have the drawback of allowing White to play b4 without preparation. Line D prematurely commits Black to a weakness on b5. Lines E and F constitute Black's best, and most solid moves, while G and H are unusual, but not so bad.

A)

5...a6

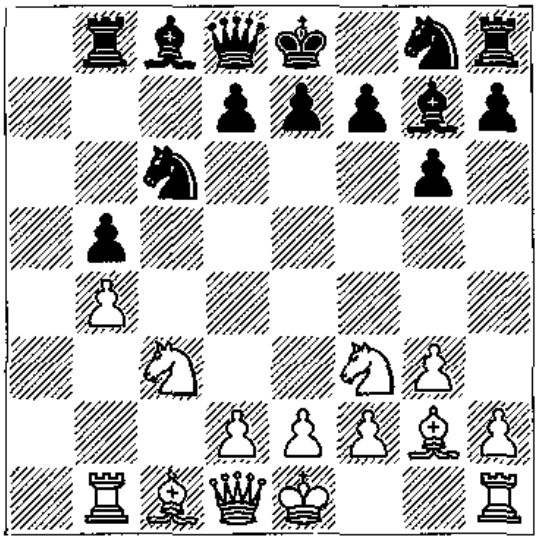
Duplication is the critical test of White's fifth move as a winning try.

This is also the case with several of White's other possible fifth moves. Black intends to copy White and break the symmetry at the right moment. I have myself used this move against stronger players with success.

6 ♖b1 ♖b8 7 b4 cxb4 8 axb4 b5 9 cxb5 axb5

A position of complete symmetry, and difficult to avoid, as attempts to do so tend to rebound on the perpetrator. How should White play now?

10 ♘f3 *(D)*



Kasparov's choice, and the most logical move here. Black has:

A1: 10...d5 77
A2: 10...e5 78
A3: 10...♘f6 80
A4: 10...♘h6?! 81

10...d6 is a little passive: 11 d4 ♗g4 12 ♗e3 ♘h6 13 ♘h4 ♗d7 14 h3 0-0 15 0-0 ♘a7 16 ♕d2 ♘f5 17 ♘xf5 ♗xf5 18 ♖a1 ♘c8 19 ♗h6, with an edge for White, Adorjan-Horvath, Hungarian Cht 1992.

A1)

10...d5 11 d4 e6

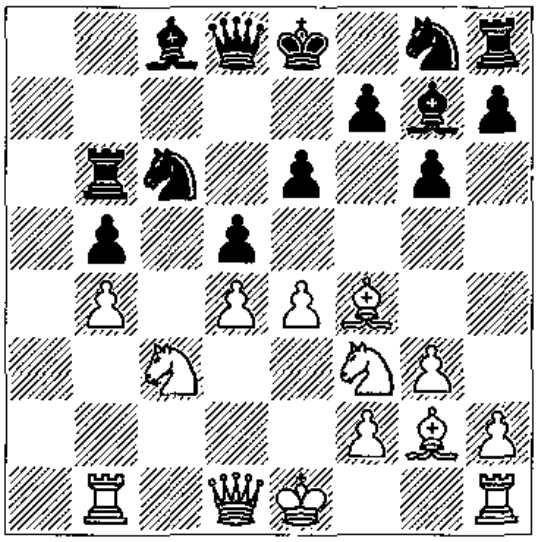
Or:

a) 11...♗f5 12 ♖b3 ♗e4 is sometimes considered to be good for a draw, but after 13 e3 (13 ♗f4 has its drawbacks, e.g. 13...♖b6 14 e3 ♗xf3 15 ♗xf3 e6 16 ♗e2?! {16 h4 ♗f8 17 ♕b1 is more circumspect} 16...g5 winning a piece, although after 17 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 18 ♗xb5 ♘ge7 19 ♗xc6+ ♖xc6 20 b5 ♖c4 21 0-0 0-0 22 b6, in Van Wely-Lautier, Monaco Amber rpd 1997, White actually managed to win) 13...♗xf3 (Black has to give up the bishop-pair, or try 13...f5!?, although 14 0-0 e6 15 ♘xe4 fxe4 16 ♘e1 ♘f6 17 f3 should be good for White, who may be able to bring his knight to c5, via d3) 14 ♗xf3 e6 15 ♗e2 (tempting, but perhaps not the best; 15 0-0 seems superior, e.g. 15...♘ge7 16 ♕d3 ♘a7 17 e4! dxe4 18 ♘xe4 ♕xd4 19 ♕b1 0-0 20 ♗b2 ♕b6 21 ♘f6+) 15...♘a7 16 ♖a3 ♕d7 17 e4 ♘e7 18 ♗f4 ♖b7 19 exd5 exd5 20 0-0 0-0 and, by careful defence, Black managed to hang on in Kosten-Syre, Slough ECC 1997.

b) 11...♘f6 12 0-0 is likely to transpose into Line A3 should play continue 12...0-0. Instead, 12...♘e4 13 ♘xe4 dxe4 14 ♘g5 ♘xd4 15 e3 ♘c6 16 ♗xe4 gives White an edge, but 12...♗f5 13 ♖b3 ♘e4 deserves to be played more often. Hickl-Bricard, Montpellier 1993 continued 14 ♗f4 ♖b6 15 ♘e5 0-0, when White's advantage was minimal, or non-existent.

12 ♗f4 ♖b6 13 e4! *(D)*

B



Injecting some life into the position.

13...♘f6

This is necessary, as 13...dxe4 14 ♘xe4 ♘xd4 allows 15 ♖c1 ♘xf3+ 16 ♕xf3 e5 17 ♕c3!.

14 e5 ♘e4 15 ♘xe4 dxe4 16 ♘d2 0-0

16...♘xd4 17 ♘xe4 is clearly superior for White.

17 ♗e3 f5 18 exf6 ♗xf6 19 ♘xe4 ♗xd4 20 0-0 e5

And now, rather than 21 ♗g5? ♘e7 22 ♖c1 ♗b7 23 ♕c2 ♖f7, when Black managed to draw in Kasparov-Kramnik, New York PCA rpd 1995, Kasparov gave the simple forced win:

21 ♗h6 ♖f5 22 ♕b3+ ♔h8 23 g4

White picks up an exchange.

A2)

10...e5

This is a more exciting choice, for White, at least.

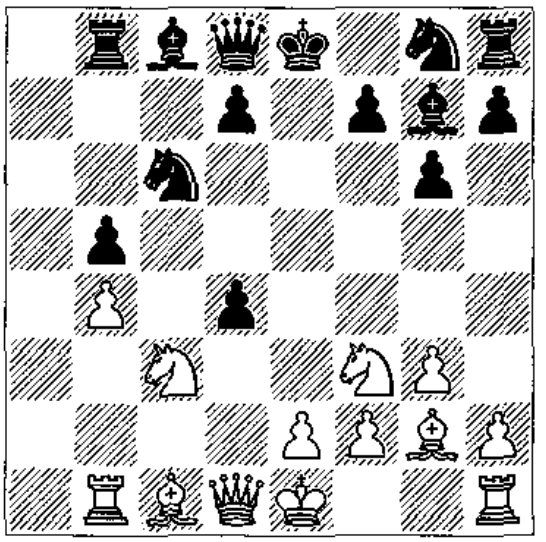
11 d4!

White makes a clever positional sacrifice of a pawn, in order to ruin Black's pawn-structure, and to get at Black's weakened dark squares.

11...exd4 *(D)*

11...♘xd4 12 ♘xd4 exd4 13 ♘e4 d5 14 ♗g5! (14 ♗f4 allows the exchange sacrifice 14...dxe4 15 ♗xb8 ♗f5 16 ♗a7 ♘e7 with good play, Despotović-Velimirović, Yugoslavia 1984) 14...♕b6 (if 14...f6 instead, then White will play 15 ♗f4 as now the previous bracket's 15...dxe4 16 ♗xb8 is less effective, because the g7-bishop's diagonal is closed, viz. 16...♗f5 17 ♗a7 and the d-pawn must advance) 15 ♘c5 ♘e7 16 0-0 ♕d8 17 ♖a1 h6 18 ♗f4 ♖b6 19 ♖a7 ♖c6 20 ♕d3 0-0 21 ♕xb5 and White's initiative proved sufficiently strong to recuperate his pawn with advantage in Hickl-Jansa, Eupen 1996.

W



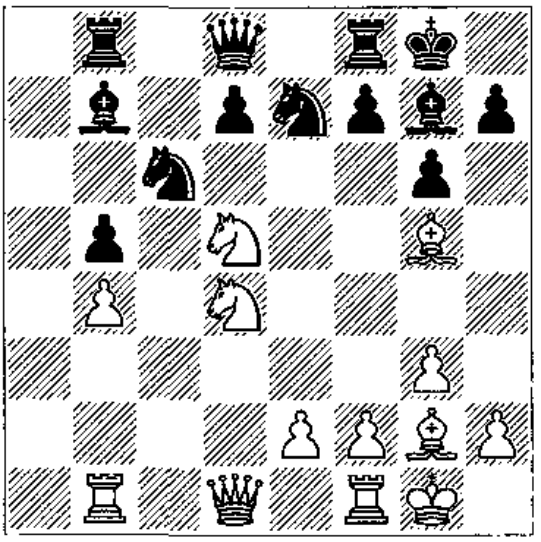
12 ♘d5 ♘f6

There are two other possibilities:

a) 12...♗b7 was played in Kastner-Gheorghiu, Atlanta 1980, but, rather than the limp 13 ♗b2 ♘f6 14 ♘xd4, which was only equal, 13 0-0!

♘f6 14 ♗g5 0-0 transposes to the game Hickl-Ree, given in the note to Black's 13th move.

b) 12...♘ge7?! 13 ♗g5 (simply threatening to win back the d4-pawn, when White's structural advantage – the d7-pawn is isolated – and more active pieces will guarantee a large plus) 13...♗b7 14 0-0 0-0 15 ♘xd4! *(D)*.



15...f6 (this loses, but the alternative, 15...♗xd4 16 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 17 ♕xd4, leaves Black's kingside dark squares excruciatingly feeble) 16 ♗f4 ♘e5 17 ♘xb5 ♘xd5 18 ♗xd5+ ♗xd5 19 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 20 ♘d6, winning easily, Serper-Pedzich, Arnhem U-20 Ech 1989.

13 ♗g5 h6

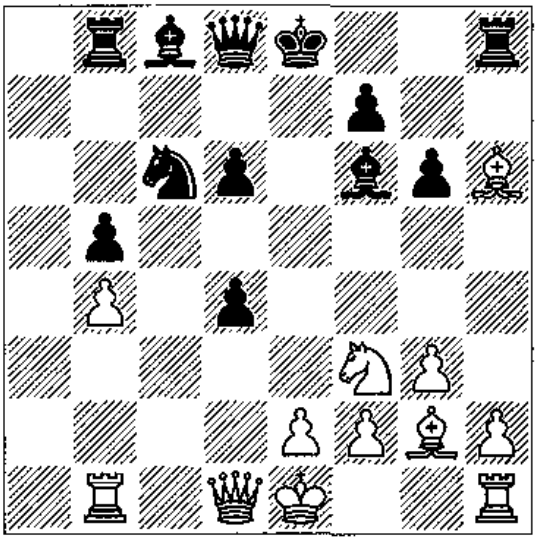
Black tries to break the unpleasant pin immediately, but this allows a curious tactical stroke. Instead of this, Black could try 13...0-0 14 0-0 (14 ♘d2 is not without its points; White's intention is to continue with ♘e4 – which would win the pinned knight on f6 – so Black is virtually obliged to play 14...h6 15 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 16 ♗xh6 ♖e8, unless he can surrender his queen somehow, but White must be better) 14...♗b7 15 ♖c1 ♖e8 16 ♖e1 h6 17 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 18 ♗xh6, which is only slightly better for White, Hickl-Ree, Lippstadt 1992. Black's activity offers a little compensation for his ragged structure.

14 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 15 ♗f4 d6

Clearly, this is the only move as 15...♖a8, or any other rook move, would allow 16 ♗d6, cutting the black position in two, but the 'undefending' of the c6-knight also has its consequences.

16 ♗xh6! *(D)*

And here it is.



16...♗f5

16...♖xh6 17 ♕c1 ♗h3 18 0-0 ♗xg2 19 ♔xg2 ♖h5 20 ♕xc6+ might be tenable for Black, but it seems unlikely as his king is badly placed, and he will probably lose the d4-pawn.

17 ♖c1 ♗e4 18 ♗d2 ♘e5 19 0-0 ♘c4?!

19...♘xf3+ 20 exf3 ♗b7 21 ♖e1+ ♔f8 favours White only slightly.

20 ♗g5!! ♗xf3

Otherwise, 20...♗xg5 21 ♕xd4 ♔d7 (21...0-0?! 22 ♘xg5 ♗xg2 23 ♕h4 is quite hopeless) 22 ♘xg5 ♗xg2 23 ♘xf7 ♕e8 24 ♘xd6 ♘xd6 25 ♖fd1 is probably winning for White, despite the temporary deficit in minor pieces.

21 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 22 exf3! 0-0 23 f4 ♖fe8 24 ♗d5 ♖bc8 25 ♕g4

White went on to win, in Zaichik-Thorsteins, Protvino 1988, by combining an attack on the kingside with one on the d4-pawn.

A3)

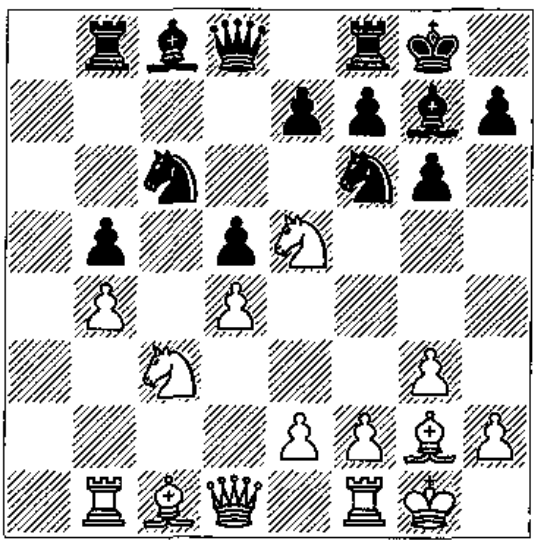
10...♘f6

Once again, Black chooses the dullest response.

11 0-0 0-0 12 d4 d5 13 ♘e5! *(D)*

Finally putting an end to Black's copying tactics. The more popular 13 ♗f4 ♖b6 14 ♘e5 is met by 14...♗f5 and, possibly, ...♘e4, returning to the symmetry!

B



The above position reminds me of the line 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘f3 ♗g7 4 g3 0-0 5 ♗g2 c6 6 0-0 d5 7 cxd5 cxd5 8 ♘c3 ♘c6 when White plays 9 ♘e5. Despite its symmetrical appearance, players such as Kasparov and Karpov have played this with White to win.

13...♖b6

13...♘xe5?! 14 dxe5 ♘g4 15 ♘xd5 ♘xe5 (15...e6 16 ♘f6+! ♘xf6 17 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 18 ♗g5) 16 ♗g5 f6 17 ♗f4 is very promising for White.

14 ♗g5

White makes good use of his 'right to move first', and keeps a firm hold on the initiative, but 14 ♘xc6!? ♖xc6 15 ♘xb5 ♗f5 16 ♖b2 ♕b6 17 ♘a3 is also worth contemplating – 'a pawn is a pawn', after all.

14...♗e6

The d-pawn must be defended – 14...♗f5? loses to 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 ♘xd5.

15 e3?!

Careless; once more, 15 ♘xc6! ♖xc6 16 ♘xb5 was not to be sniffed at. There is no obvious method of recapturing this pawn, and once the knight moves from b5, the b-pawn will be free to get on its way.

15...♘e8!

Swinging the knight around to c4, via d6, and also threatening to win a piece.

16 e4

16 ♘xc6? is now a blunder, since after 16...♖xc6 17 ♘xb5 f6 18 ♗f4 g5 White loses a piece – his 15th move has blocked its route.

16...♘xe5?

This time Black slips up. 16...dxe4 is much better, e.g. 17 ♗xe4 ♘xd4 18 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 19 ♕xd4 ♕d6 with the advantage.

17 dxe5 d4 18 ♗f4?

Missing a good chance: 18 ♘d5! ♗xd5 19 ♕xd4 pins the d5-bishop, and leaves Black in all sorts of trouble.

18...♘c7

18...f6!.

19 ♘d5 ♗xd5 20 exd5

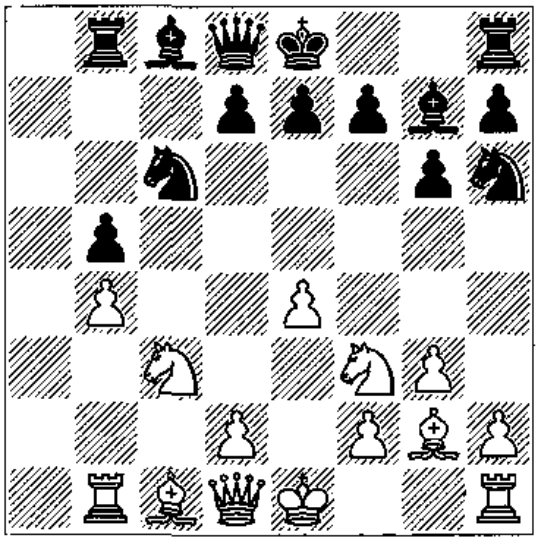
20 ♕xd4!?.

20...♘xd5 21 ♕xd4 ♘xf4 22 ♕xf4 ♖e6

Black is doing fine, Renet-Ashley, Saint Martin 1993.

A4)

10...♘h6?! 11 e4 *(D)*

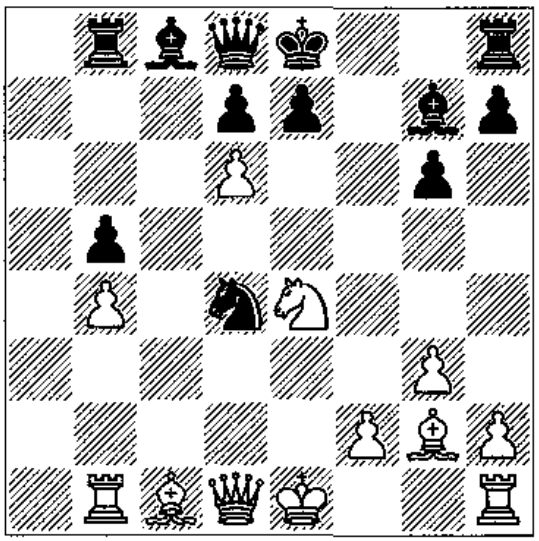


This is frequently a good response to ...♘h6, for not only does White threaten to set up a large centre with d4, but, more importantly, he also deprives the h6-knight of the f5-square, and leaves it languishing on the flank.

11...f5 12 d4 fxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♘f5

Black has managed to obtain the f5-square for his knight, but at too great a cost.

14 d5 ♘cd4 15 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 16 d6 *(D)*



16...♘f5 17 ♗g5

The d6-pawn will cause Black no end of problems, Timman-Kostro, Wijk aan Zee 1971.

B)

5...e6?!

Black's intended set-up of ...♘ge7, ...0-0 and ...d5 or ...b6 has a good reputation against most white fifth moves, but after 5 a3 the temporary weakness of Black's dark squares allows White to build a formidable initiative.

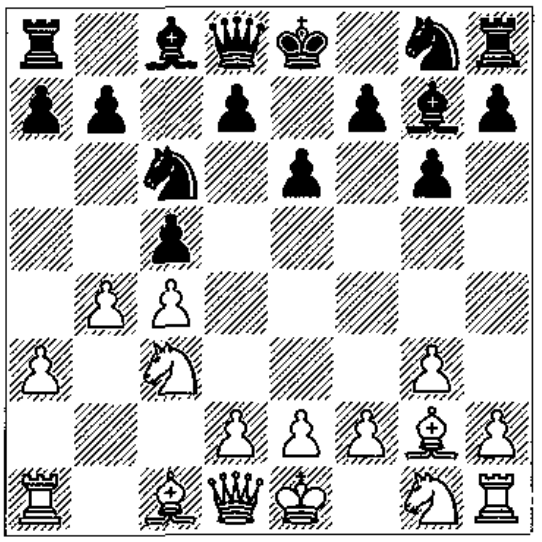
6 b4! *(D)*

Why prepare this move with ♖b1 when you can play it anyway?

6...♘xb4

This tactical trick was thought to be Black's saving resource for a time. Instead:

B



a) The other capture, 6...cxb4 7 axb4, leads to similar problems for Black:

a1) 7...♘ge7 8 b5 ♘e5 9 c5 d5 10 cxd6 ♕xd6 11 ♗a3 ♕d8 12 ♘h3 0-0 13 0-0, Ra.Garcia-R.Byrne, Lugano OL 1968, is wonderful for White, who has an extra central pawn, active pieces, and all this at no cost!

a2) 7...d5 is even worse. 8 cxd5 exd5 9 b5 ♘ce7 10 d4 ♘h6 11 e3 0-0 12 ♗a3 ♘hf5 13 ♘ge2 ♗e6 14 0-0 and Black has given himself an isolated d-pawn to add to his other problems, Kogan-Dlugy, USA Ch 1986.

a3) 7...♘xb4 8 ♗a3 (White can also avoid the doubled c-pawns by 8 ♕b3 ♘c6 9 ♘f3 d6 10 0-0) 8...♗xc3!? 9 dxc3 ♘c6 when Black's dark squares seem very vulnerable, Renet-Yudasin, Ostend 1988, although it is not clear quite how White should go about tackling the position; perhaps 10 ♘f3 ♘ge7 11 e4 (keeping Black 'boxed in') 11...0-0?! 12 h4!?.

b) After 6...d6 White should play 7 bxc5 dxc5 8 ♗b2.

c) If Black 'cops out' by 6...♘ge7 then, rather than play 7 bxc5?!, allowing 7...♗xc3 8 dxc3 ♕a5, Vaulin-Pogorelov, Budapest 1991, 7 ♘f3 (or 7 e3!?) is interesting as Black will either have to defend the c-pawn, or capture on b4, very soon: 7...♘xb4 (7...cxb4 is dangerous in view of 8 axb4 ♘xb4 9 ♗a3 ♘bc6 10 ♘b5 0-0 11 ♗d6 threatening to win the black queen) 8 axb4 cxb4 9 ♘e4!? (9 d4 bxc3 10 0-0 is no doubt possible, and similar to the main line, but this suggestion of John Watson is lots of fun) 9...♗xa1 10 d4 (cutting off the dark-squared bishop, and threatening mate in two) 10...♗c3+ 11 ♔f1 and Black must find a way to defend his dark squares.

7 axb4 cxb4 8 d4

8 ♘b5 is entertaining, but I cannot recommend it. The problem is that after 8...♗xa1 9 ♕a4, instead of 9...♗e5 10 ♘f3 ♗b8 11 ♗b2 f6 12 h4 a5 13 h5, with a powerful initiative, Hodgson-Gulko, Groningen 1994, there is 9...♗f6 10 d4 a6! 11 ♘d6+ ♔f8 12 ♘f3 ♗e7 13 ♕xb4 a5 14 ♕c5 f6, Lobron-Kavalek, Bochum 1981, where Black managed to defend successfully.

8...bxc3 9 e3 ♘e7 10 ♘e2 d5

10...0-0 11 ♘xc3 ♕c7 12 ♕b3 a6 13 ♗a3 d6 14 0-0, Masculo-M.Gurevich, New York 1991, is very difficult for Black, who must find a way to defend all his weak points, i.e. d6, b6 and b7.

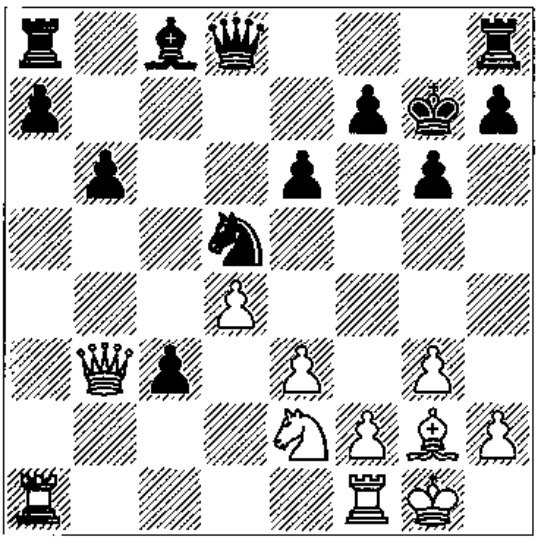
11 cxd5 ♘xd5 12 ♗a3

This is the point of White's play. Black's king is trapped in the centre and he must swap off the dark-squared bishops in order to find a safe haven on the kingside. White is temporarily two pawns down, but will recapture the c3-pawn when he likes, and then he will have 'Benko-style' compensation for the remaining pawn: strong centre and queenside pressure, both on the open a- and b-files, and along the h1-a8 diagonal.

12...♗f8 13 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 14 ♕b3 ♔g7 15 0-0 b6 *(D)*

15...♗d7 might be the best practical try, answering 16 ♕xb7 with 16...♖b8 17 ♕xa7 ♗b5, so 16 ♗xd5 exd5 17 ♕xb7 should be tried, and following 17...c2 18 ♕xd5 ♗f5 19 ♕xd8 ♖hxd8 20 f3 ♗d3 21 ♔f2, White should be able to pick up the c-pawn with care.

W



16 e4 ♘f6 17 e5 ♘d5 18 ♘xc3 ♗b7 19 ♘b5

Having created an outpost on d6, White rushes his knight to this square. Once there, the control of the c8-square will allow White to infiltrate along the c-file.

19...♕b8?!

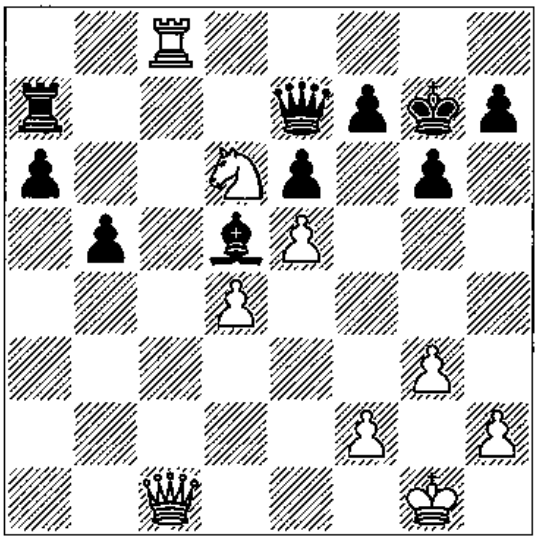
19...♕d7.

20 ♖fc1 a6 21 ♘d6 ♖d8

Hoping to be able to sacrifice the exchange on d6, but White makes sure this is never effective.

22 ♕a3 ♖a7? 23 ♖a2 ♗a8 24 ♗xd5! ♗xd5 25 ♖ac2 b5 26 ♖c8 ♕b6 27 ♖xd8 ♕xd8 28 ♖c8 ♕e7 29 ♕c1! *(D)*

B



29...♖a8 30 ♖c7 ♕f8 31 ♕f4 ♔h8 32 ♖xf7 ♕d8 33 ♕h6 ♕g8 34 ♖c7

1-0 Krasenkow-Brynell, Copenhagen 1996.

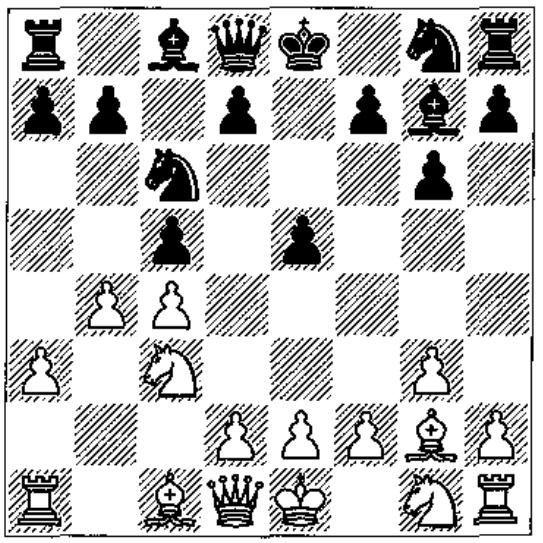
C)

5...e5?!

Black wishes to play a Botvinnik set-up, but this is not the most accurate method of obtaining this. The prophylactic 5...a5 or 5...d6 is more precise, as now White can play...

6 b4! *(D)*

B



This is even stronger here than after 5...e6 as the g7-bishop's diagonal is now blocked.

6...d6

This move is obligatory, as 6...cxb4? 7 axb4 ♘xb4 8 ♗a3 ♗f8 (8...♘c6 9 ♘b5 is catastrophic for Black) 9 ♕a4 ♘c6 10 ♘b5 (10 c5!?) 10...♗xa3 11 ♕xa3 ♘ge7 12 ♘d6+ ♔f8 allows White a powerful bind for little cost, Bischoff-Tatai, Budapest 1987.

7 ♖b1

Universally played, but 7 bxc5 dxc5 8 ♗xc6+ bxc6 also seems very promising for White, who can continue 9 ♖b1 ♘e7 10 d3 and, as appropriate, ♗e3 and ♘e4 or ♘a4, when the c5-pawn will begin to look a little sick.

7...♘ge7 8 d3 0-0 9 e3

Incidentally, this set-up is a useful one to know, in the case of Black playing a different move-order. For instance, 2...♘c6 3 ♗g2 e5 4 ♘c3 d6 and now 5 a3! g6 6 b4 is possible, with a likely transposition, as 6...cxb4 (6...♗g7) 7 axb4 ♘xb4 8 ♕a4+ ♘c6 9 ♗xc6+ bxc6 10 ♕xc6+ ♗d7 11 ♕b7 ♖c8 12 ♖xa7 ♖xc4 13 ♘f3 is favourable for White. 1...e5 2 g3 d6 3 ♗g2 c5 4 ♘c3 ♘c6 5 a3 amounts to the same.

9...♖b8

If Black plays 9...f5, then White should certainly avoid 10 b5?!, since 10...e4! is rather awkward, Bönsch-Uhlmann, Berlin 1988. Instead, 10 ♘ge2 is good.

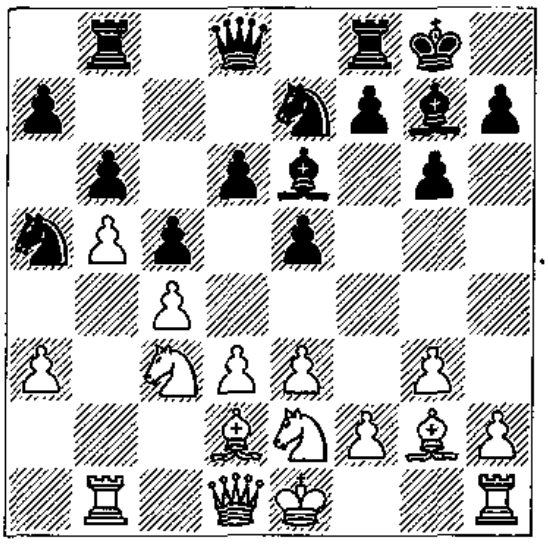
10 ♘ge2 ♗e6 11 b5

White forces the c6-knight to the edge of the board, where it will find great difficulty returning to the fray.

11...♘a5 12 ♗d2 b6 *(D)*

The freeing move 12...d5? is impossible, owing to the a5-knight, viz. 13 cxd5 ♘xd5 14 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 15 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 16 0-0 b6 17 ♗xa5 bxa5 18 ♘c3, when White's knight will dominate the g7-bishop (this is a common problem in this line). White will continue with e4 and ♘d5.

W



13 0-0 ♘b7 14 e4 ♔h8?!

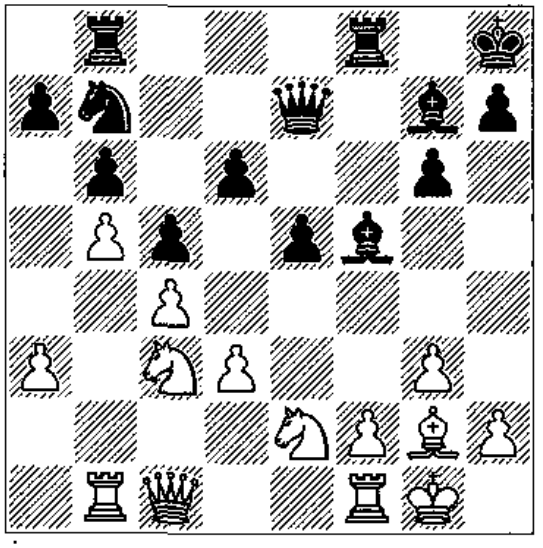
Black should prepare ...f5 with 14...h6.

15 ♕c1 f5 16 ♗g5

Another typical idea: this is a position for knights so White will exchange his g5-bishop for the e7-knight to enforce his control of d5.

16...♕e8 17 ♗xe7! ♕xe7 18 exf5 ♗xf5?! *(D)*

This allows White possession of the e4-square, as well as the d5-square. 18...gxf5 is superior, and best met by 19 f4.



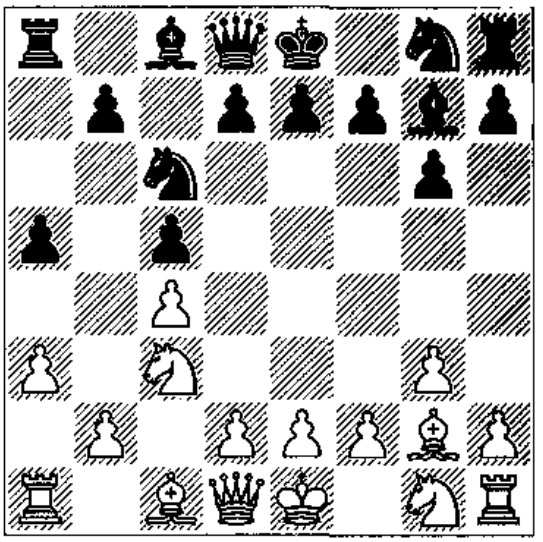
19 ♘d5 ♕d7 20 ♕d2 ♘a5 21 ♘ec3 ♖be8 22 ♘e4 ♘b7 23 a4 ♘a5 24 h4

Kasparov-Karpov, Seville Wch (4) 1987. After careful preparation White broke with f4, and won the game convincingly.

D)

5...a5?! *(D)*

A very popular reply. Black tries to put an end to White's queenside play, but weakens b5. However, Black would save time by waiting for White to play ♖b1, as in Line E. White should now give up his queenside attack, and



decide on which line he can play to best exploit the b5-square.

6 ♘f3

There seems little point playing ♖b1 any more. Of course, 5 ♘f3 is one of the most important lines in the Symmetrical Variation, but this version is even better, as the insertion of a3 and ...a5 favours White in many lines. Black has four main replies:

D1: 6...d6 85
D2: 6...e5 86
D3: 6...e6?! 87
D4: 6...♘f6?! 88

D1)

6...d6 7 0-0 e5

This leads to a version of Line E with White not having played ♖b1, which gives him more options.

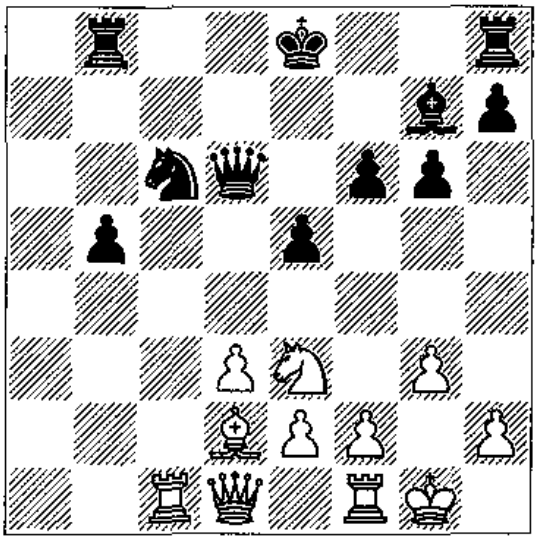
8 ♘e1 ♘ge7 9 ♘c2 0-0

Putting the black king into safety. Black cannot afford to avoid this:

a) 9...♗e6 10 ♘e3 f5 (or 10...0-0 11 d3 f5 12 ♘ed5 ♖b8, Nikolaidis-Petraki, Korinthos 1998, and now 13 ♗g5 would have won control of d5)

11 ♘ed5 ♖b8 12 d3 ♗f7?! (Black fails to understand the problems of the position; 12...h6 prevents White's next move) 13 ♗g5 h6 14 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 15 ♘xe7 ♔xe7 (forced, as 15...♕xe7 allows White to exchange light-squared bishops by 16 ♗d5, when a classic case of d5-knight against g7-bishop position arises) is good for White, Lobron-Podlesnik, Ljubljana 1989.

b) 9...♖b8 10 d3 ♗e6 11 ♗g5 f6! 12 ♗d2 d5 13 cxd5 ♘xd5 14 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 15 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 16 b4 axb4 17 axb4 b5 18 ♘e3 ♕d6 19 bxc5 ♕xc5 20 ♖c1 ♕d6 *(D)*.


W

Now, in Seirawan-Arnason, Moscow GMA 1990, White obtained an overwhelming position by the exchange sacrifice 21 ♖xc6! ♕xc6 22 ♕b3 ♕d7 23 ♖c1 ♖c8 24 ♖a1 ♖c6 25 ♘d5, trapping the black king in the centre.

10 ♘e3

10 d3 ♖b8 11 ♗g5 is tempting, as, you never know, Black might play 11...h6?!, when 12 ♗xe7 obtains a hold on the d5-square, as in Kosten-Sulipa, French Cht 1997. I won the game quickly.

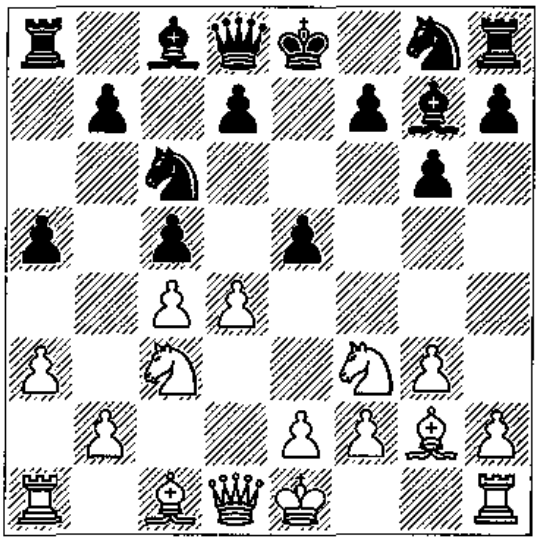
10...♖b8 11 d3 ♗d7 12 ♗d2 ♘d4 13 ♖e1 b5?! 14 cxb5 ♘xb5 15 ♘c4 ♕c7?! 16 ♘xb5 ♖xb5 17 a4

White wins a pawn at least, Kaidanov-Egeli, Gausdal 1991.

D2)

6...e5 7 d4!? *(D)*

This move of Miles's, exploiting the temporary weakness of b5 and d6 in the most radical of manners, is good fun, although the simple 7 0-0 ♘ge7 8 ♘e1 will lead to Line D1. If the reader prefers this to the, admittedly theoretical, text, then I suggest he pass over this section.


B

7...cxd4

7...♘xd4 8 ♘xd4 cxd4 9 ♘b5 ♕b6 10 e3 d6 11 exd4 exd4 12 ♗f4 is wonderful for White, Oms Pallise-Lopez Colon, Spanish Cht (Oropesa del Mar) 1996.

8 ♘b5 d6

Or 8...d5 9 cxd5 ♘a7, when 10 ♘xa7 ♖xa7 11 e3 ♕xd5 12 0-0 ♗g4 13 ♘xd4! ♕xg2+ 14 ♔xg2 ♗xd1 15 ♘b5 leads to an endgame edge for White, Miles-Kagan, Melbourne 1992.

9 e3 ♗g4

Alternatively:

a) 9...♗e6 10 exd4 (10 b3 seems more to the point than this pawn sacrifice, e.g. 10...a4?! 11 exd4 axb3 12 d5 e4 13 dxe6 ♗xa1 14 ♘g5 with a powerful attack, e.g. 14...♘e5 15 exf7+ ♘xf7 16 ♘e6, or 10...d5 11 c5 dxe3 12 ♘d6+ ♔f8 13 ♗xe3 leading to interesting play) 10...♗xc4 11 ♕a4 ♗xb5 12 ♕xb5 ♕d7 13 dxe5 dxe5 14 ♗e3 ♖d8 15 0-0 ♘ge7 soon led to a draw in Urban-Umanskaya, Koszalin 1998.

b) 9...♘ge7 10 exd4 0-0 and now, instead of 11 d5, which was only a little better for White in Kosten-Viatte, French Cht 1993, 11 0-0 should be good, intending to exploit the knight's presence on b5 to pressure d6.

10 h3 ♗xf3 11 ♗xf3! ♘ge7 12 exd4 exd4 13 ♗f4 ♗e5 14 ♗h6 ♘f5 15 ♕d2! *(D)*

Forcing his majesty to spend more time in the centre of the board than will prove good for his health.

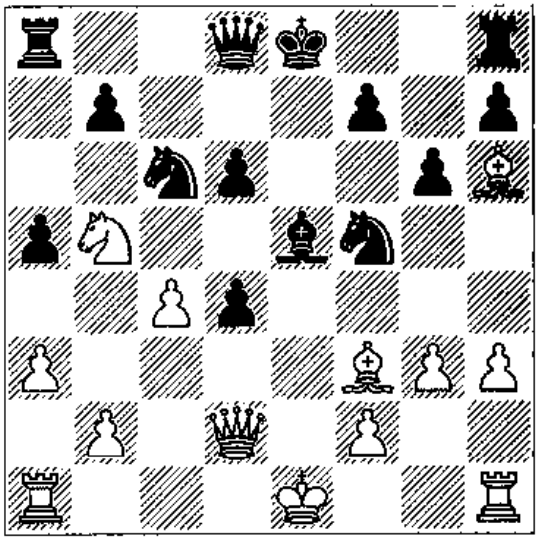
15...a4!? 16 0-0 ♘a5 17 ♖ae1! ♘xc4

If 17...♘b3 18 ♕b4 ♘xh6 then 19 ♘xd6+ wins.

18 ♕b4 ♘xh6 19 ♗xb7! 0-0?!

Black tries to buy his way out, but 19...♖b8 20 ♗c6+ ♔f8 21 ♕xc4 is only marginally better.

B



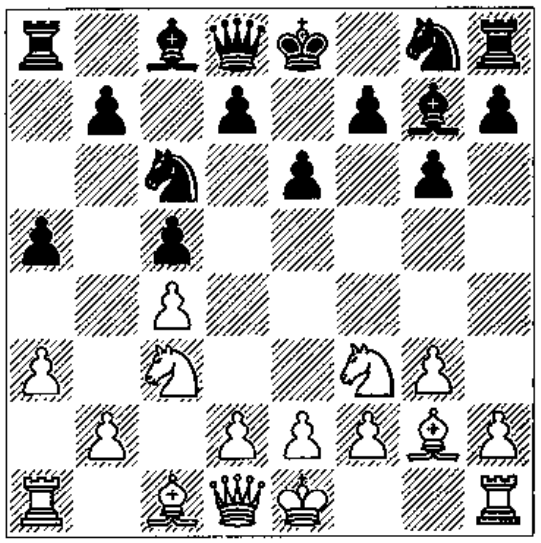
20 ♗xa8 d5 21 ♗c6 ♕c8 22 ♗xd5 ♕xh3 23 ♗g2 ♕h5 24 ♖e4!

White soon won in Miles-Kudrin, Los Angeles 1991.

D3)

6...e6?! *(D)*

W



Once more this undermining of the dark squares is forcibly met by...

7 d4! ♘xd4

If 7...cxd4, then 8 ♘b5 e5 9 e3, winning back the pawn with advantage, as 9...dxe3?? allows the bone-crushing reply 10 ♕d6, e.g. 10...e4 11

♘c7+ ♕xc7 12 ♕xc7 exf3 13 ♗xf3 ♗e5 14 ♕b6 ♗d4 15 ♕b3 exf2+ 16 ♔f1, which must win for White.

8 ♘xd4 cxd4

8...♗xd4 9 ♘b5 ♗e5 (9...♗g7?? loses immediately to 10 ♕d6) 10 ♗e3 ♕b6 11 f4 ♗b8 12 b4 offers White a powerful initiative.

9 ♘b5 ♕b6 10 ♕a4!

Not the often-recommended 10 e3, as Black has 10...d5!.

After 10 ♕a4, Black is in trouble, e.g. 10...♘e7 11 ♗f4 e5 12 c5 ♕xc5 13 ♖c1 winning.

D4)

6...♘f6?!

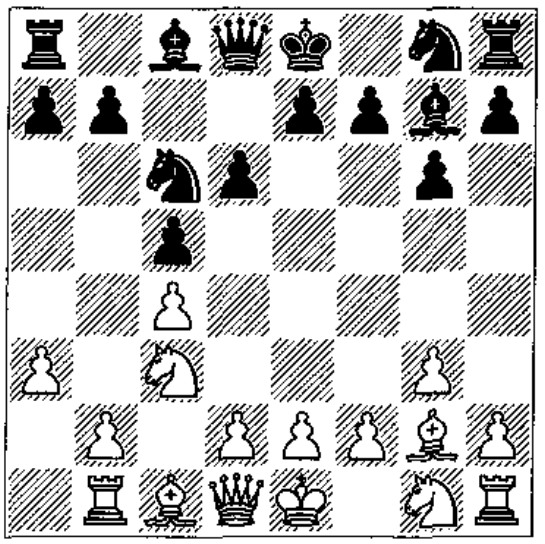
This is rare, as it allows White to play 7 d4, when 7...cxd4 8 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 9 ♕xd4 d6 leaves Black in an inferior variation, with the added problem that b5 is weak and his normal source of counterplay, ...a6 and ...b5, is impossible. Rather than 10 ♗g5 0-0 11 ♕e3, which is just a little better for White, Miles-Gulko, USA Ch 1989, 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♕d3 is strong.

E)

5...d6

A solid and flexible move, leaving the a1-h8 diagonal open.

6 ♖b1 *(D)*


B

This time White is obliged to prepare the b4 thrust.

6...a5

Black saves a move by playing this move now, after White has played ♖b1, in comparison with Line D, for instance. Black's intention is to play a Botvinnik set-up, continuing with ...e5 and ...♘ge7, which is a respected method for trying to equalize.

a) Whilst sensible, 6...♘f6 is lacking in incisiveness, and can be well answered by 7 ♘h3! intending ♘f4, clamping down on d5, followed by the move b4. 7...♘h5 (it is difficult to know what to suggest here; 7...e5 hinders the h3-knight's hop to f4, but after 8 d3 White will continue with the awkward move f4; 7...a5 8 ♘f4 might be best, and would lead to Line F) 8 d3 0-0 9 ♘f4 ♘xf4 10 ♗xf4 h6 11 ♕c1 ♔h7 12 b4 cxb4 13 axb4 ♘d4 14 ♗d2 ♖b8 15 e3 ♘c6 16 0-0 ♗f5 17 ♕c2 ♕c8 18 ♘d5 ♖e8 19 ♗c3 and by simple means, White has secured a large advantage, Chernin-Pekarek, Prague 1989.

b) 6...♗e6!? is more thoughtful, but still, after 7 d3 ♕d7 8 ♗d2 ♘f6 9 b4 ♖c8 10 ♘f3 b6 (10...♗h3? is a mistake, allowing 11 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 12 bxc5 dxc5 13 ♖xb7 winning a pawn) 11 ♘g5! (pointing out the disadvantages

of Black's sixth move, White threatens to take the two bishops) 11...♗f5 12 e4 ♗g4 13 f3 h6 14 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 15 fxg4 ♕xg4 16 ♕xg4 ♘xg4 17 ♗h3 h5 18 0-0+ ♗f6 19 ♘d5 White has good play on both sides of the board, Yudasin-Krasenkov, Las Palmas 1993.

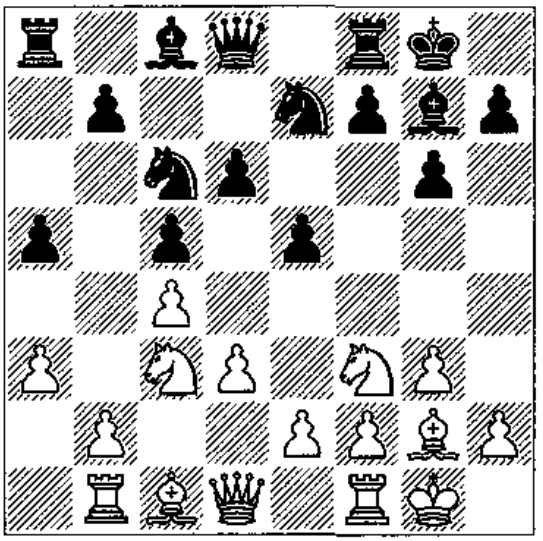
7 ♘f3

Once again, White has to decide how best to continue. Bearing in mind that Black will continue with ...e5, White has the straight choice between two set-ups: e3, d3 and ♘ge2; or ♘f3, 0-0 and ♘e1-c2. In the first case he may have the opportunity to occupy the d5-square with ♘d5, and support this with ♘ec3; in the second case the knight is ready to support the move b4, and can control d5 from e3. I think that the latter is best in this position, simply because White normally needs to play b4 quite soon in order to get his queenside play going. This shows the big disadvantage of the immediate 5...e5 for Black (Line C) – in that line White could play b4 with no preparation, and he could therefore play the set-up with e3 and ♘ge2 to good effect.

7...e5 8 0-0 ♘ge7 9 d3

9 ♘e1 is possible, but the text-move has the merit of preparing a positional 'trick'.

9...0-0 *(D)*



Clearly, Black cannot play 9...♗e6 because of the possibility of 10 ♘g5.

10 ♗g5 f6!

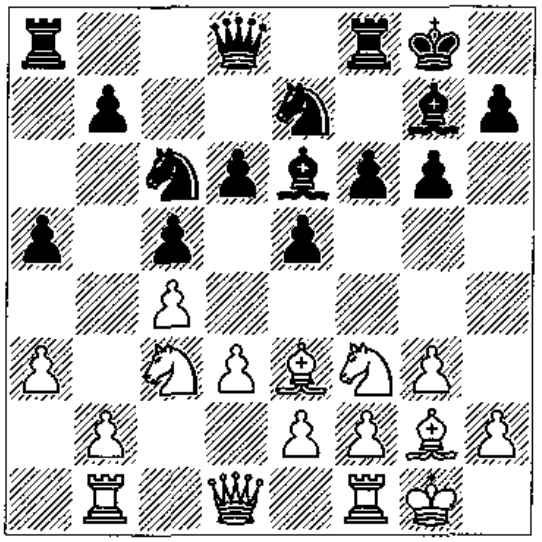
This is almost the only possibility, for if 10...h6?! then White can put his thematic plan into operation by 11 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 (11...♕xe7 is worse, ceding d5, e.g. 12 ♘e1 ♗e6 13 ♘c2 ♖ab8 14 ♘e3 ♔h8 15 ♘ed5 ♕d7 16 b4 axb4 17 axb4 cxb4 18 ♘xb4 f5, Preiss-Espig, Baden-Baden 1990, and now 19 ♗d5 is strong, exchanging light-squared bishops). One example: 12 ♘e1 ♖b8 13 ♘c2 ♗e6 14 b4 (14 ♘e3 is also logical, keeping d5 under surveillance) 14...cxb4 15 axb4 d5 (15...axb4 16 ♘xb4 will allow White to place a piece on d5, and then attack the b7-pawn along the open b-file) 16 cxd5 ♘xd5 17 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 18 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 19 ♘e3 ♕d8 20 ♕a4 axb4 21 ♖xb4 f5 22 ♖fb1 and, in Peelen-Zso.Polgar, Wijk aan Zee 1990, White went on to exploit the pressure down the b-file, and his superior minor piece.

11 ♗e3

This is an interesting idea of Andersson's. By putting pressure on the c5-pawn, White forces Black into ...b6 before he can play ...d5, and this offers White extra options.

11...♗e6 *(D)*

Should Black play 11...f5, then not 12 ♗g5 as Black will, if he understands the position, play 12...♗f6, but 12 ♘e1 ♗e6 13 ♘d5, threatening ♗g5, and after 13...h6, 14 ♘c2 and b4.



12 ♘e1 ♕d7

The standard move here is 12...♖b8, hoping to reply ...b5 if White plays ♘d5, and preparing ...b6. However, White has time to play 13 ♘c2 b6 14 b4 with an edge, e.g. 14...axb4 15 axb4 d5?! 16 cxd5 ♘xd5 and now, instead of 17 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 18 ♗xd5+ ♕xd5 19 bxc5 bxc5, which is only a tiny bit better for White, Bauert-Hamdouchi, Sitges 1995, 17 ♗xd5! ♗xd5 18 bxc5 bxc5 19 ♖xb8 ♘xb8 20 ♗xc5 wins a pawn.

13 ♘c2 a4 14 b3 axb3 15 ♖xb3

White has pressure on b7 and will later play ♗d2 and ♘e3-d5, Andersson-Seirawan, Linares 1986.

F)

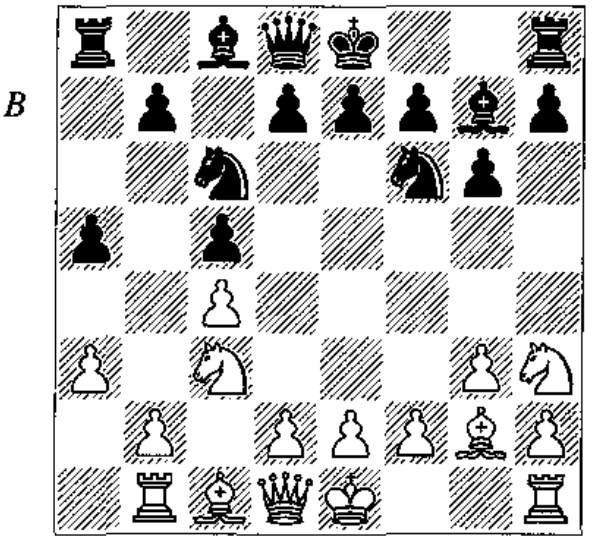
5...♘f6

A sensible developing move.

6 ♖b1 a5

Black should hold back the b-pawn. 6...0-0 allows White's plans to proceed unhindered: 7 b4 cxb4 8 axb4 a5 (this is Black's best chance, since otherwise the black knight gets kicked around: 8...e6 9 b5 ♘e5 10 c5 d5 11 cxd6 ♕xd6 12 ♕b3 {12 d4!?} 12...♖d8 13 ♘h3 ♘d5 14 ♗a3 ♕b6 15 ♘xd5 exd5 16 ♘f4 is clearly better for White, Hodgson-Rõtšagov, Amsterdam Donner mem 1995), when 9 bxa5 is simplest, with White enjoying the better pawn-structure and pressure on b7, as 9 b5 ♘b4 10 ♕b3 d5 11 cxd5 ♗f5 allows complications, Hort-Janošević, Harrachov 1966.

7 ♘h3 *(D)*



Chernin's recipe. At first sight it seems that White should have some way to exploit the fact that Black has played ...a5, and is already committed to ...♘f6, but it is not so simple, as White has himself played a3 and ♖b1, which might turn out to be pointless

moves if Black opens up the centre. With the text-move, White intends ♘f4, keeping a hold of d5, before castling, and then to prepare b4. For instance, if 7 e3 then 7...0-0 8 ♘ge2 e6 is fine, intending ...d5.

7...0-0

There are two other options:

a) 7...d5 8 cxd5 ♗xh3 9 ♗xh3 ♘xd5 may be possible, when Black's extra space counterbalances the two bishops to some extent, although 10 ♗g2 e6 11 ♘xd5 exd5 12 ♕b3 might well be good for White.

b) 7...h5 is purposeful, exploiting the offside placing of the white king's knight, but rather than the 8 ♘f4 h4 9 ♘d3!? d6 10 b4 cxb4 11 axb4 h3 12 ♗f3 ♘d4 of Gurgenidze-Gufeld, USSR 1973, simple piece development by 8 d3 h4 9 ♗g5 hxg3 10 hxg3 is more to the point.

8 ♘f4 d6

Protecting the c-pawn (and continuing normal development), is rational as sometimes White can play the surprising ♘d3, hitting the c-pawn, and then play b4. 8...b6 9 0-0 ♗b7 10 e3 e6 11 d4 cxd4 12 exd4 d5 13 cxd5 exd5 14 ♘fxd5 ♘xd5 15 ♗xd5 ♗xd4 16 ♗h6 ♗g7 17 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 18 ♕a4 ♖c8 19 ♖bd1 led to a more active position for White in Miles-Arkell, British Ch (Torquay) 1998.

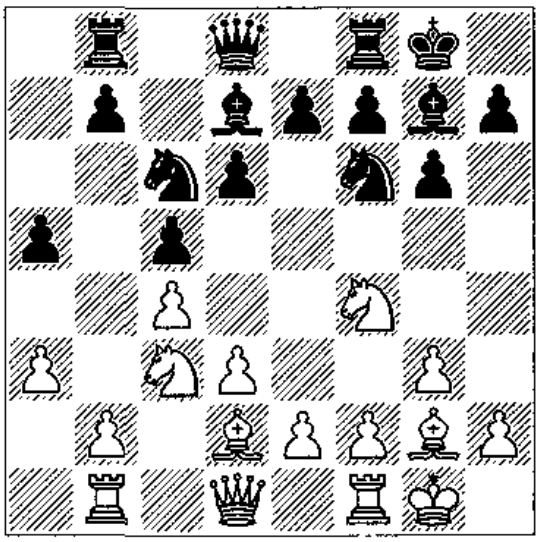
9 0-0 ♖b8

Best. Instead, 9...♗d7 10 d3 ♘e8 11 ♗d2 e6 12 ♘b5 a4 13 ♗c3 ♕e7 14 e3 ♗xc3 15 bxc3 ♘f6 16 ♖e1 ♖fc8 17 ♖b2 ♘d8 18 ♕e2 ♖a5 19 ♖eb1 gives White strong pressure along the b-file, Miles-Hjartarson, Moscow 1990.

10 d3 ♗d7 11 ♗d2 *(D)*

After 11 b3, 11...♘d4 12 e3 ♘f5 13 d4 cxd4 14 exd4 d5 15 ♘fxd5 ♘xd5 16 ♘xd5 e6 17 ♘c3 ♘xd4 18 ♘e4 h6 19 ♗e3 favoured White in Sadewasser-Schmitt, Bad Zwesten 1999, but protecting b5 by 11...♘e8 and ...♘c7 was clearly the correct plan.

B



11...♘e8!

The attempt to play ...b5 immediately by 11...♘a7?! failed for tactical reasons in Hickl-Mochalov, Erevan OL 1996, as 12 b4 axb4 13 axb4 cxb4 14 ♖xb4 b5 was met by 15 ♕a1! winning a pawn, the game continuing 15...♘c6 16 ♖xb5 ♖xb5 17 cxb5 ♘d4 18 ♕a6.

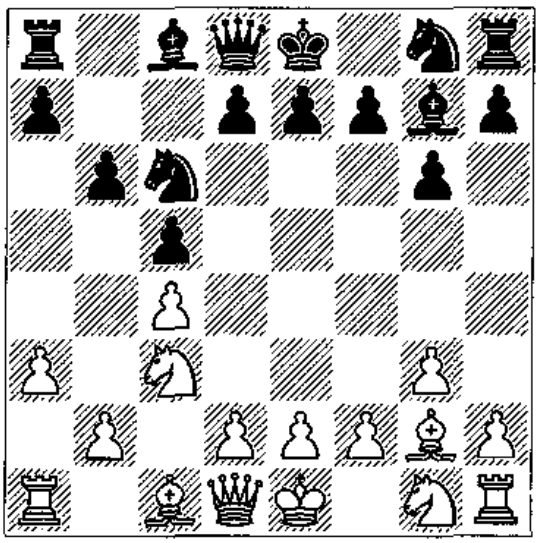
12 ♘b5 ♘c7 13 ♘xc7 ♕xc7 14 ♘d5 ♕d8 15 ♘c3

Black is close to equalizing, Hickl-Sosonko, Polanica Zdroj 1993.

G)

5...b6 *(D)*

W



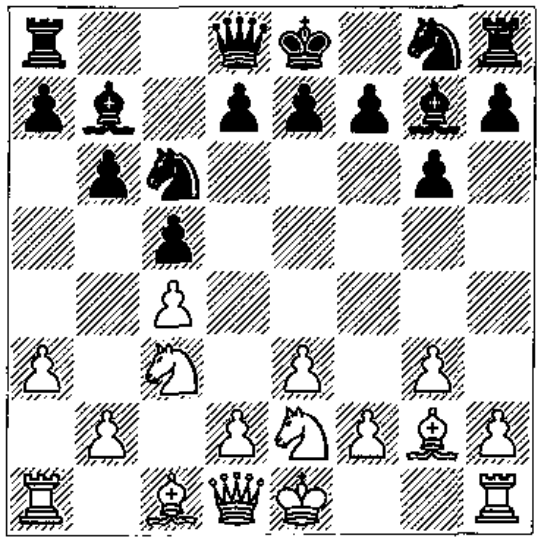
Not a very popular move. Black ignores White's queenside expansion, and instead aims to nullify White's pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal by tactical means, as ...♗b7 and ...♕c8 will afford Black various tricks based on ...♘d4.

6 e3

White can play b4 immediately, but simple development offers the most. If Black wants to waste time exchanging White's g2-bishop, let him.

6...♗b7 7 ♘ge2 *(D)*

B



7...♘a5

This is the time-wasting point of Black's play, but spending time to exchange one piece like this, and thereby bringing his knight to a square with little prospects, must have its drawbacks. If 7...♕c8 then 8 d3 ♘f6 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖b1, preparing b4, Kruppa-Brodsky, Nikolaev Z 1993. In fact, later in this game, White decided to play e4, exploiting the fact that Black's pieces are far from ideally placed for a Botvinnik System.

8 ♗xb7 ♘xb7 9 b4

9 d4 cxd4 10 exd4 ♖c8 11 b3 e6 12 a4 ♘e7 13 ♗a3 d6 14 0-0 also favours White, Poldauf-Yasseen, Cairo 1997.

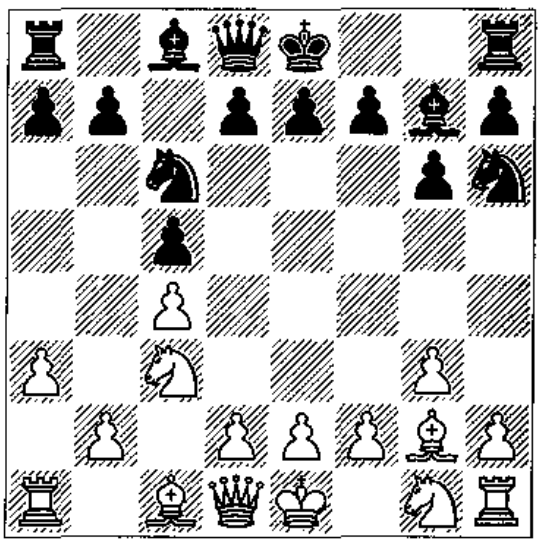
9...♘f6 10 ♗b2 0-0 11 0-0 d5 12 cxd5 ♘xd5 13 ♕b3 ♘f6 14 d4 cxb4 15 axb4 ♘d6 16 b5!

Fixing the a7-pawn, and preparing to exploit his strong centre and the c6-square, King-Motwani, Blackpool Z 1990.

H)

5...♘h6 *(D)*

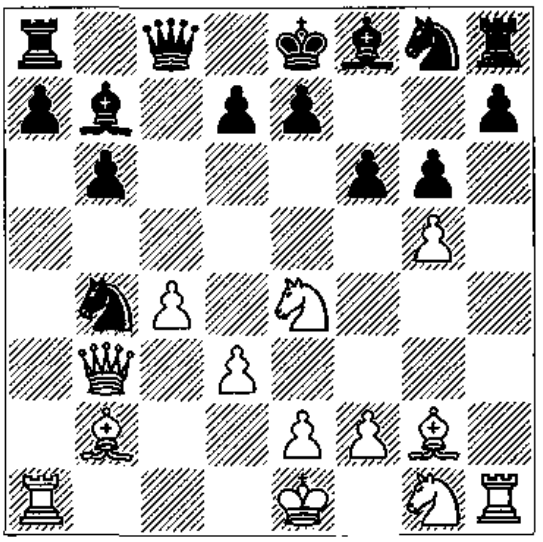
W



This move can be answered by the sensible 6 ♖b1, for example 6...a5 7 e3 ♘f5 8 ♘ge2 d6 9 b3 0-0 10 ♗b2 ♗d7 11 0-0 ♖b8 12 ♘b5 ♗xb2 13 ♖xb2 ♘e5 14 ♘ec3 ♗xb5 15 ♘xb5 a4 16 d4 ♘c6 17 b4 cxd4 18 exd4 ♕b6 19 ♖d2 ♖fd8 20 ♖e1 d5 21 c5! and by simple means White has built up an enormous advantage, Miles-Arencibia, Cienfuegos 1996.

The combative 6 h4!? also worked out well for White in Hodgson-Arkell, Isle of Man 1996. Play continued 6...♘f5 7 h5 b6 8 d3 ♗b7 9 h6! ♗f8 10 b4! ♕c8 11 ♘e4 cxb4 12 axb4 ♘xb4 13 ♗b2 f6 14 g4 ♘xh6 15 g5 ♘g8 16 ♕b3 *(D)*.

B

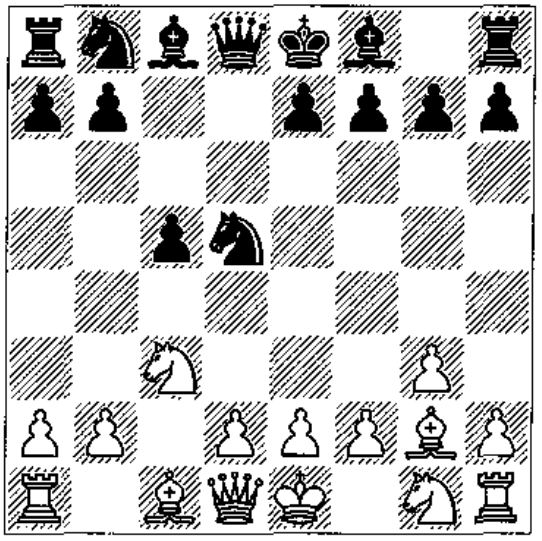


Black soon crumpled under the pressure.

9 The Rubinstein Variation: 2...♘f6 and 3...d5

1 c4 c5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 ♘c3 *(D)*

B



Other moves would be faulty, allowing Black to continue with ...♘c6 and ...e5 whilst maintaining his knight in the centre.

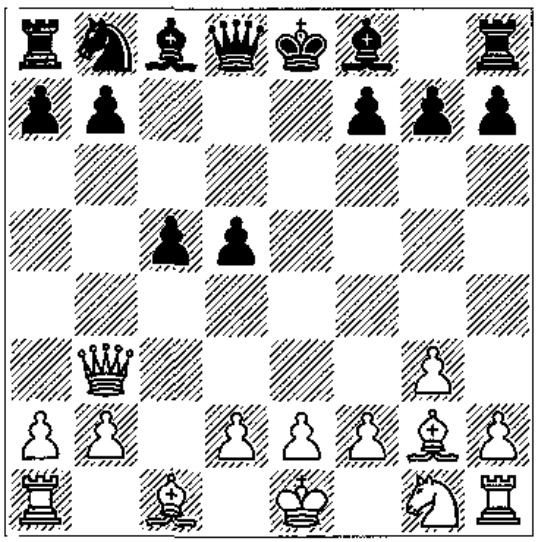
5...♘c7

This was Rubinstein's idea. Black intends to play ...e5, with a reversed Maroczy Bind. The knight is best placed on c7, from where it can go to d4, via e6, and control b5. This is all very ambitious; should it succeed then Black will have more space and will be better. However, the other side of the coin is the time wasted – Black is essentially two tempi down on the corresponding line for White. Thus we can map out the future play: White should develop his pieces and play actively, hoping to force Black onto the defensive before he achieves his development. The alternatives are inferior:

a) 5...♘xc3 (this strengthens the white centre, but is quite playable and may be compared with the Grünfeld Defence, although White is certainly not obliged to play d4, and give Black a target) 6 bxc3 g6 7 ♖b1 (threatening the b-pawn, with dire consequences for the black position, both by 8 ♗xb7, and also by 8 ♖xb7 ♗xb7 9 ♗xb7, winning back the exchange) 7...♕c7 (7...♘c6?! 8 ♕a4 ♕c7 9 ♗xc6+ bxc6 10 ♘f3 ♗g7 11 ♗a3 ♗f5 12 ♖b2 is most unpleasant for Black, who will lose the c5-pawn, e.g. 12...♗h3?! 13 ♘g5 ♗g2?! 14 ♖g1 ♗d5 15 e4 ♗e6 16 ♘xe6 fxe6 17 ♕c4, when Black's structure is a mess, Hertneck-Weber, Bundesliga 1987/8) 8 ♘h3!? ♗g7 9 ♘f4 0-0 10 h4 ♘c6 11 h5 g5 12 h6 ♗e5 13 ♘d5 with lots of play for White, Karlsson-Abdel, Thessaloniki OL 1984.

b) 5...e6?! can be met by 6 ♘f3 ♘c6 7 0-0 ♗e7 8 ♘xd5 exd5 9 d4 with a transposition to Chapter 10, but 6

♘xd5 exd5 7 ♕b3 *(D)* is rather more to the point, winning a pawn:



b1) 7...♗e6 8 ♕xb7 ♘d7 9 ♘h3 (9 ♘f3 ♗e7 10 0-0 0-0 11 d3 ♗f6 12 ♗f4 is also good for White, Garcia Martinez-Swic, Polanica Zdroj 1978) 9...♘b6 10 ♕a6 ♗d6 11 d3 0-0 12 ♘f4 ♗c8 13 ♕a5 ♗b7 14 0-0 and Black has no real compensation, Garcia Martinez-Farago, Polanica Zdroj 1978.

b2) 7...♘c6 8 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 9 ♗xd5 ♘b4 10 ♗e4 f5 11 ♗b1 g6 12 ♘f3 ♘c6 13 d3 ♗g7 14 a3 b6 15 ♗a2 ♗b7 16 0-0 and Black is completely lost, a pawn down for nothing, Gelfand-Kramnik, Sanghi Nagar Ct (8) 1994.

c) 5...♘b6?! 6 a4! (the black king's knight turns out to be badly misplaced) 6...♘c6 7 a5 ♘d7 8 ♕a4 ♕c7 9 d3 e5 10 f4! (White does not let up) 10...♗d6 11 ♘f3 0-0 12 ♘b5 ♕b8 13 0-0 ♖e8 14 ♘g5 a6 15 ♕c4 ♖e7 16 ♘xf7! ♖xf7 17 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 18 ♕xf7+! 1-0 Ubilava-Huguet, Ibercaja 1993, as 18...♔xf7 19 fxe5+ is discovered check.

d) 5...♘b4?! (this knight will probably find itself on c7 anyway, via a6, after White plays a3, so this is probably just a waste of time) 6 ♘f3 and now:

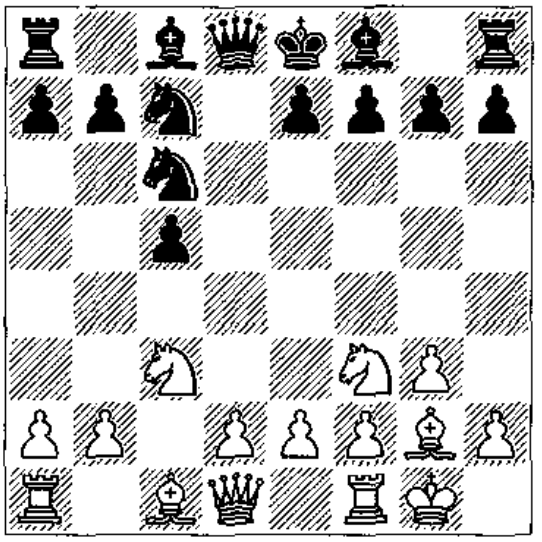
d1) 6...♘8c6 7 a3 ♘a6 8 0-0 e5 9 d3 ♗e7 10 ♘d2 ♘c7 11 ♗xc6+ bxc6 12 ♘c4 f6 13 ♕a4 and Black is a tempo down on a bad variation, Pantaleoni-Godena, Lugano 1989.

d2) 6...♘4c6 might be better. After 7 0-0 e5 8 e3!? ♗e7 9 d4 exd4 10 exd4 ♘xd4 11 ♘xd4 cxd4 12 ♘d5 ♘c6 13 b4 a6 14 ♗b2, Black played 14...♗e6? in Sunye-Popović, Palma de Mallorca 1989 and after 15 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 16 a4 ♖d8 17 b5, the white bishop's arrival on a3 trapped the black king in the centre, where it did not manage to resist too long. 14...0-0 is healthier, and only slightly better for White after 15 ♗xd4 ♘xd4 16 ♕xd4 ♗e6 17 ♘xe7+.

e) 5...♘f6 6 ♘f3 ♘c6 7 0-0 e6 (Black has to be more circumspect here; the f6-knight deprives Black of the important move ...f6, bolstering the e-pawn, so that if 7...e5 then 8 d3 ♗e7 9 ♘d2 ♗d7 10 ♘c4 would be awkward to meet) 8 e3 ♗e7 9 d4 (White elects to transpose into a favourable IQP position where Black has problems developing his queenside) 9...cxd4?! (9...0-0 is more prudent) 10 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 11 exd4 0-0 12 ♗f4 ♕b6 13 ♕e2 ♗d7 14 d5! and the thematic central d5 thrust confirms White's advantage, Korchnoi-Wirthensohn, Bad Kissingen 1981.

6 ♘f3 ♘c6 7 0-0 *(D)*

B



7...e5

The most natural move, and the point of Black's play, but there are two alternatives:

a) 7...g6 (this certainly seems sensible, reinforcing Black's control of d4; if White hangs about, Black will achieve good play) 8 ♘a4! (this seems odd, placing the knight on the rim, but c5 is attacked, and it is not evident how to defend it) 8...b6 (after this, the weakness of the h1-a8 diagonal costs Black the exchange, albeit in return for a lot of activity; otherwise, defending c5 by 8...e5 makes the move ...g6 seem pointless, e.g. 9 d3 ♗d7 10 a3 ♘e6 11 ♗e3 b6 12 b4! cxb4 13 d4! exd4 14 ♘xd4 ♖c8 15 axb4 with a powerful initiative, Romanishin-Palatnik, Kiev 1973) 9 d4! cxd4 10 ♗f4 ♗g7 11 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 12 ♗xc7 ♕xc7 13 ♗xa8 0-0 14 ♗g2 ♗a6 (after 14...♖d8 15 ♘c3, Black should transpose with 15...♗a6, as although 15...♘f3+ wins the white queen, after 16 ♗xf3 ♖xd1 17 ♖fxd1 ♗xc3 18 ♖ac1 ♗e6 19 ♖xc3, Polugaevsky-Taimanov, USSR Ch (Tbilisi) 1966/7, White has a clear advantage) 15 ♘c3 ♖d8 16 ♔h1 (16 ♖c1!?) 16...♘xe2 17 ♕a4 ♗c4 18 ♖fd1 ♘d4 19 ♖ac1 b5 and now, instead of 20 ♘xb5, Razuvaev-Kirov, Bulgaria 1981, 20 ♕a6 is best, with some advantage.

b) 7...e6?! is too passive. 8 d3 ♗e7 9 ♗e3 and now:

b1) 9...e5?! leaves Black a tempo down on normal positions, and it is no surprise that he is punished after 10 ♘d2 ♗d7 11 ♘c4 f6 12 ♘e4 b6 13 ♘ed6+ ♔f8, Vilela-Am.Rodriguez, Bayamo 1989. White could now have 'driven the nail in' by 14 f4!, e.g. 14...exf4 15 ♗xf4 ♘e6 16 ♕d2. Note that 14...b5? loses to 15 ♘xe5 fxe5 16 fxe5+ ♔g8 17 ♘xb5!, clearing the route for an appropriate ♕b3+.

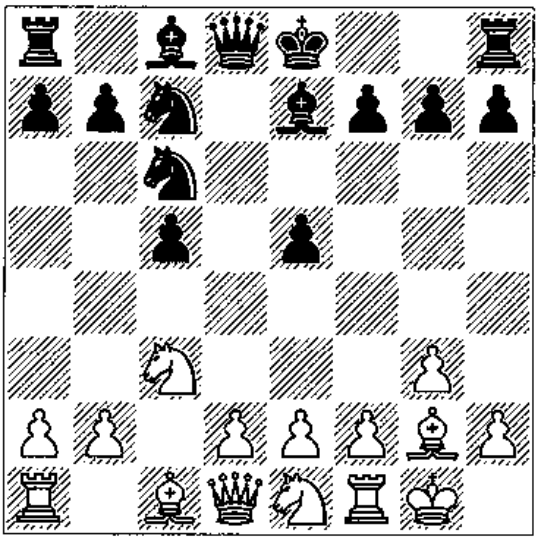
b2) 9...0-0 10 d4 cxd4 11 ♘xd4 ♘a5 (it is difficult to know what else to suggest here as Black's queenside is under severe pressure; 11...♘b4 12 ♕d2 e5 13 ♘b3 ♕xd2 14 ♗xd2 ♘c6 15 ♗e3 ♗e6 16 ♘c5 ♗xc5 17 ♗xc5 ♖fd8 18 ♖fd1 ♘a6 19 ♗d6 obviously favours White, who has the bishop-pair and more space, Polugaevsky-Padevsky, Varna 1972) 12 ♕a4! ♘d5 13 ♘xd5 exd5 14 ♗d2! ♘c4 15 ♗c3, and now, after 15...♗e6?, White executed the thematic plan 16 ♘xe6 fxe6 17 b3 ♘d6 18 ♕g4 ♘f5 19 e4 dxe4 20 ♕xe4, wrecking the black pawn-structure, in Illescas-Kamsky, Buenos Aires 1993. 15...♘b6 is better, but still clearly very much to White's taste.

8 ♘e1

Shatskes's idea aims to threaten the doubling of Black's pawns, followed by the odd move ♘d3, attacking the e5-pawn, and f4, when White can answer ...exf4 with ♘xf4. This knight can be very strong here, and certainly better than the dark-squared bishop, eyeing both d5 and e6. 8 d3 ♗e7 9 ♘d2 ♗d7 10 ♘c4 is the main line, but personally I do not think that it offers White a great deal.

The doubled pawns

It seems odd that White would willingly exchange his king's bishop, which is so important for the defence of his kingside light squares. However, his kingside is quite solid, and the damage inflicted on the black queenside pawns can be devastating. For example, consider the position after **8...♗e7?!** *(D)*.



Black's last move, ...♗e7, does nothing to stop White's basic plan – to win the c5-pawn, and so he continues **9 ♘d3** (creating a direct threat to the e5-pawn – by ♗xc6+, killing its defender) **9...f6 10 ♗xc6+! bxc6 11 ♕a4 ♗d7 12 b3 0-0 13 ♗a3**, ganging up on the forward black c-pawn, which can be further attacked by ♖c1 and ♘e4, and will undoubtedly be won.

8...♗d7

This is the most common move, but possibly not the best. Black knows that there is a threat of ♗xc6+, and so defends against it. Unfortunately for Black, this allows White to put his plan into motion. For 8...♗e7, see the above example; otherwise:

a) 8...♗e6 is only slightly better, because White simply plays the same way (as against 8...♗d7): 9 ♘d3 f6 10 b3 (more accurate than the immediate 10 f4, when 10...c4 11 ♘f2 exf4 12 gxf4 ♕d7 is equal, Smyslov-Hübner, Velden Ct (6) 1983) 10...♕d7?! (careless; 10...♗e7 is better, or 10...♘d5 when, instead of continuing 11 ♗b2 ♗e7 12 ♖c1 ♘db4 13 ♘xb4 cxb4 14 ♘e4 ♗d5, Klovsky-Agzamov, Erevan 1981, which seems fairly level, 11 ♘a4 is pertinent, e.g. 11...b6 12 f4 exf4 13 ♘xf4 ♗f7 14 ♘c3 with a typical initiative) 11 f4 exf4 12 ♘xf4 ♗f7 13 e3 ♗e7 14 ♗h3! ♕d8 (if 14...♕d6 then 15 ♗b2 threatens ♘e4) 15 ♗b2 (this position should be compared to that arising from 8...♗d7) 15...0-0 16 ♖f2 ♗d6 17 ♗f5!? ♘e7 18 ♗c2 ♔h8 19 ♘e4 ♘ed5 20 ♕g4 ♗xf4 21 gxf4 b6 22 ♖g2 ♘e8 23 ♖f1 ♕e7 24 ♘g3 ♗g8 25 ♖f3 ♖d8 26 ♘f5 ♕d7 27 ♖h3 with a massive kingside build-up for

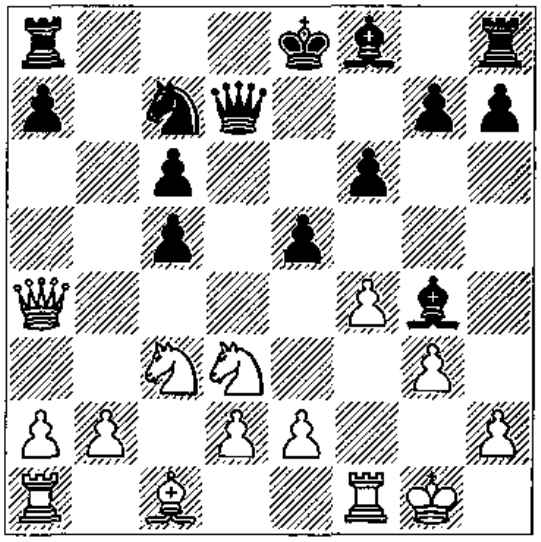
White, which, in Kosten-Lazarev, St Affrique 1996, soon broke through, despite Black's heroic defence.

b) 8...♗d6?! (this has few redeeming features) 9 ♗xc6+ bxc6 10 d3 (10 ♕a4 is pointless, since White does not really want to take the c6-pawn anyway, as this would free the c8-bishop's h1-a8 diagonal: 10...0-0 11 ♕xc6 ♖b8 12 d3 ♖b6 ½-½ Kosten-Magem, La Réunion 1996) 10...♗h3 11 ♘g2 ♕d7 12 ♘e4 ♗e7 13 f3 0-0 14 ♗e3 ♘e6 15 ♖c1 f5 16 ♘f2 ♗xg2 17 ♔xg2 and the isolated c-pawns are too weak, Barkhagen-Malmstig, Haninge 1997.

c) 8...♗f5 (Black allows the doubling of pawns, but stops ♘d3) 9 f4 exf4 10 d3 ♗d6 11 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 12 ♗xc6+ bxc6 13 ♖xf4 ♗g6 14 ♕a4 (14 ♖c4!? 0-0 15 ♘a4 ♘e6 16 ♖ac1 has its points) 14...♕d6 and now after 15 ♖c4 0-0 16 ♘g2, Black managed to hold the balance by the typical manoeuvre 16...♖fb8! 17 ♕c2 ♘e6 in Adgestein-Farago, Wijk aan Zee 1988, but 15 ♘e4 ♕d5 16 ♘g2 0-0 17 ♘h4 (or 17 ♘e3) promises an edge, as Black's c-pawns are always going to be a liability.

d) 8...♗g4 9 ♕a4 (if 9 ♘d3? then 9...♕xd3! 10 exd3 ♗xd1 is the point of Black's eighth move) 9...♕d7 10 ♗xc6 bxc6 11 ♘d3 f6 12 f4 *(D)* and now:

B



d1) 12...♘b5 13 ♖f2! (the 13 ♘f2 of Ludgate-Bulla, corr Ech 1990, is wrong as White needs the knight on d3 to maintain the pressure on Black's centre; this game continued 13...♘xc3 14 dxc3 ♗xe2 15 ♖e1 ♗b5, leading to unclear play) 13...♗xe2 (13...exf4?? allows 14 ♘xb5 cxb5 15 ♕e4+ picking up the rook on a8) 14 ♘xe5! fxe5 15 ♖xe2.

d2) 12...♘d5 (this may be best, attacking e2) 13 ♖f2 exf4 14 ♘xf4 ♘xf4 and Black has chances to equalize.

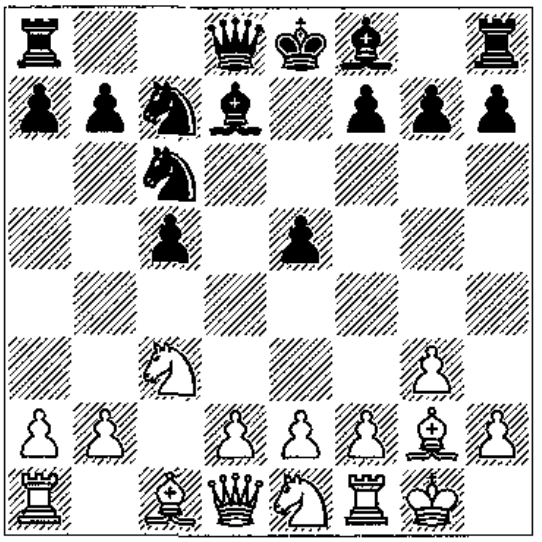
d3) 12...exf4 13 ♖xf4 ♗e6 14 ♕a5 keeps Black on the defensive.

d4) 12...♕d4+ and now, rather than 13 ♘f2 ♕xa4 14 ♘xa4 ♗xe2, Friedgood-R.Webb, British League (4NCL) 1996/7, White should play 13 ♖f2! ♕xa4 14 ♘xa4 c4 15 ♘dc5, when Black's ragged structure outweighs his bishop-pair.

e) 8...h5!? 9 f4!? (9 h4 or 9 h3 is reasonable, although White should definitely keep his king's bishop to defend his king in this line) 9...h4 10 d3 hxg3 11 hxg3 c4?! 12 dxc4 ♗c5+ 13 e3 ♕xd1 14 ♘xd1 exf4 15 ♘d3 f3 16 ♖xf3 ♗e7 17 ♘1f2 ♘e6 18 ♘e4 ♘g5 19 ♘xg5 ♗xg5 gives Black insufficient compensation for the pawn, P.Nikolić-Cebalo, Vršac 1983.

f) 8...♕d7 9 ♘d3 f6 10 b3 ♗d6?! 11 ♘e4 b6 12 ♗a3 ♘b5 13 ♗b2 ♘bd4 14 e3 ♘e6 15 ♕h5+ ♔d8 looks disastrous for Black, Wegerle-Kacmarik, Mureck U-14 Ech 1998.

Now we return to the position after 8...♗d7 *(D)*:



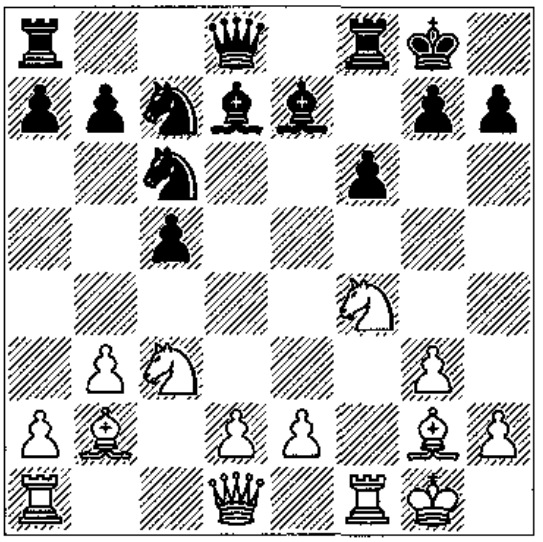
9 ♘d3 f6

The other means of supporting the imperilled e5-pawn, 9...♗d6?!, is inferior as Black will have to concede the bishop-pair: 10 ♘e4 ♕e7 11 b3 0-0 12 ♗b2 ♖fe8 13 ♖c1 ♘a6 14 f4 exf4 15 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 16 ♘xf4 ♖ad8 17 e3 ♗f5? (Black goes rapidly downhill after this) 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♘h5+ ♔f8 20 ♖xf5 ♕xd2 21 ♕xd2 ♖xd2 22 ♗xc6 bxc6 23 ♖cf1 and Black's pawns drop off, Secker – Sideif-Zade, Berlin 1992.

10 b3 ♗e7 11 f4 exf4

This is obligatory, for if Black allows White to capture on e5, White will enjoy the luxury of the e4-square for his knight, and the frailty of e5, to go with his other pluses. For example, 11...0-0? 12 fxe5 fxe5 13 ♗b2 b6 14 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 15 ♖c1 ♖c8 16 ♕f1 ♕e8 17 ♘e4 h6 18 e3 ♕e6 19 ♘df2 ♕g6 20 ♗h3 ♘e6 21 ♕d3 ♖d8 22 ♘xc5 is winning for White, Winants-Van de Bourry, Ostend 1992.

12 ♘xf4 0-0 13 ♗b2 *(D)*



The key position for this line: the white minor pieces have all found good squares, White has the open f- and c-files, but his pawn-structure is statically worse. Given time, Black will be able to exchange a couple of pieces and bring his rooks to the central files, pressurizing the e- and d-pawns. Unfortunately for Black, events rarely get so far, as he normally loses before he can harmonize his forces. Apart from active piece play – White can play e3, ♕h5, and then ♘cd5, aiming to force mate by ♗d5+ and ♘g6, for instance – a very strong plan is e3, ♕e2, ♖ad1 (bringing every one of White's pieces into the fray), and then d4-d5-d6. This pawn, excellently supported by White's pieces, often

serves as the straw that breaks Black's back.

13...b6

Or 13...♔h8 14 e3 ♗e8 15 ♕e2 ♕d7 16 ♖ad1 ♗f7 17 ♗h3 ♕d8 18 ♘e4 b6 19 ♗f5 ♘d5 20 ♘e6 ♗xe6 21 ♗xe6 ♘db4 22 d4 cxd4 23 exd4 ♘d5 24 ♕h5! (White must break the blockade of the IQP!) 24...♘e3 25 d5 g6 26 ♕e2 ♘xd1 27 ♖xd1 ♘e5 28 d6 (winning material) 28...♕e8 29 dxe7 ♕xe7 30 ♘xf6! ♕xe6 31 ♕xe5 1-0 Kosten-Coenen, San Sebastian 1995.

14 e3 ♗d6

This piece was doing a good job defending f6.

15 ♘cd5 ♕e8?

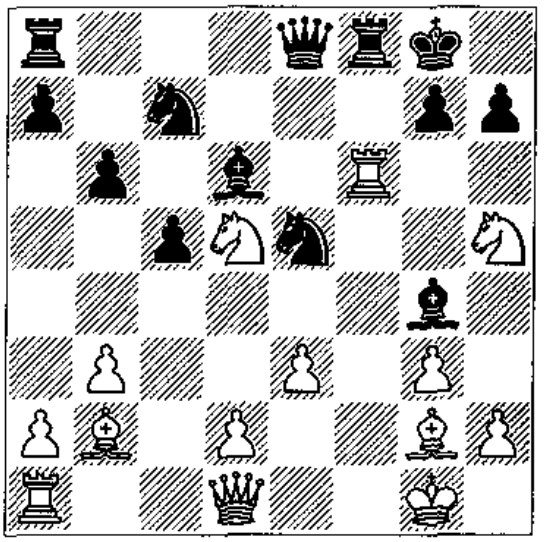
15...♖c8 is better, as now 16 ♘h5 has little point, with f6 more solidly defended. Even so, after 16 d4 ♘e7?, 17 dxc5! ♗xc5 18 b4 is winning for White. After 18...♘exd5 (18...♗d6 19 ♘xf6+ decimates the black position) 19 ♗xd5+ ♘xd5 20 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 21 bxc5, Black can resign, Vaganian-Lengyel, Moscow 1975.

16 ♘h5

Black is already lost!

16...♘e5 17 ♖xf6 ♗g4 *(D)*

Now White wins neatly.



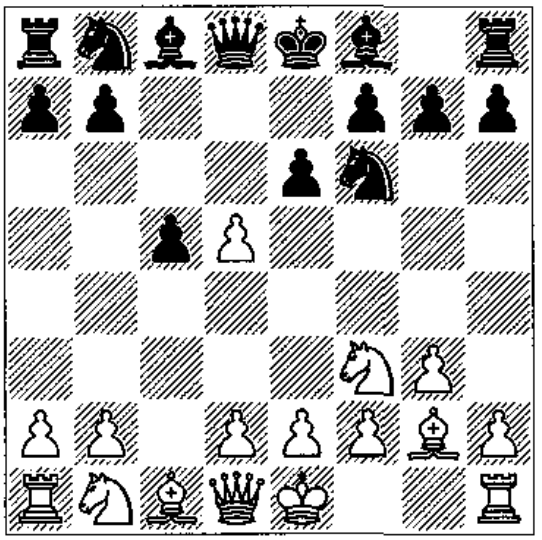
18 ♘xg7! ♕d7 19 ♕c2 ♔xg7 20 ♖xd6 ♕xd6 21 ♘xc7 ♕xc7 22 ♗xa8

D.Cramling-Lengyel, Eksjö 1982. White has a decisive material advantage.

10 The Keres-Parma Variation: ...e6 and ...d5

1 c4 c5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 e6 4 ♘f3! d5 5 cxd5 *(D)*

B



5...♘xd5

Black decides to play as in a Semi-Tarrasch, into which White will transpose when he plays d4, although it pays to delay as much as possible, so as to restrict Black's choice of defence.

5...exd5 is not very common, and would bring us into a pure Tarrasch Defence, should White reply with 6 d4. This is perhaps a little outside the scope of this work, but here are a few suggestions in any case. After 6...♘c6 7 0-0 ♗e7, apart from 8 ♘c3, which transposes directly into the heavily analysed main lines of the Tarrasch, White can delay developing his queen's knight, for example by 8 dxc5 ♗xc5 9 ♗g5. Now:

a) 9...0-0 10 ♕c2!? (10 ♘c3 d4 11 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 12 ♘d5 is good, but leads to an important main line) and here:

a1) 10...♗b6 11 ♘c3 ♗e6 (11...d4? 12 ♘e4) 12 ♖ad1 h6 (12...♖e8 13 ♘e4!?; 12...d4? 13 ♘e4) 13 ♗f4.

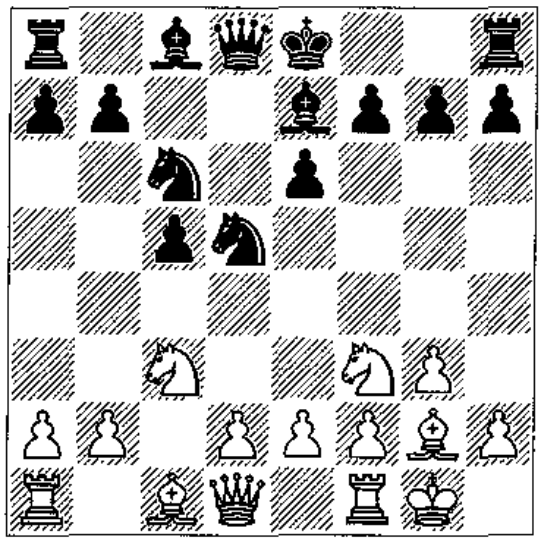
a2) 10...♗e7 11 ♘c3 h6 (I tried this line out whilst writing this book; my opponent played 11...d4 and after 12 ♖ad1 ♕b6 13 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 14 ♘d5 ♕d8 I replied 15 ♕e4!, winning a pawn and, eventually, the game, in Kosten-Baillon, Clermont-Ferrand 1999; however, 12 ♖fd1 is probably better, because Black could have played more strongly with 12...♕a5, as my opponent pointed out after the game) 12 ♗f4 ♗e6 13 ♖ad1 ♖c8 14 ♕a4 ♘a5 15 ♘e5 with advantage, Yanofsky-Gligorić, Lone Pine 1975.

b) 9...♗e6 10 ♘c3 ♗e7 (10...0-0 11 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 12 ♘xd5 ♕xb2 13 ♘c7 ♖ad8 14 ♕c1 ♕xc1 15 ♖axc1 and ♘xe6 leads to White's advantage, despite the opposite-coloured bishops, since the e6-pawn can be attacked by ♖c4-e4, h4 and ♗h3) 11 ♕a4 0-0 (11...h6 12 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 13 ♖fd1 ♗xc3 14 bxc3 ♕e7 15 ♘d4 with a big

advantage, D.Pavlović-Sinadinović, Niš 1981) 12 ♖ad1 ♕b6 13 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 14 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 15 ♖xd5 ♕xb2 16 ♖b5 ♕xe2 17 ♖xb7 and Black is in big trouble, Andersson-Unzicker, Wijk aan Zee 1981.

6 0-0 ♘c6 7 ♘c3 ♗e7 *(D)*

Not 7...e5? 8 ♘xe5.



8 ♘xd5 exd5

8...♕xd5?! exposes the queen prematurely. 9 d3 (or 9 d4!? ♘xd4 10 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 11 ♕c2 with some initiative – the white pieces will develop to aggressive squares much more easily than their black counterparts) 9...0-0 10 ♗e3 ♕d6 11 d4 cxd4 12 ♘xd4 with advantage, Dzindzichashvili-Kraidman, Israel 1976.

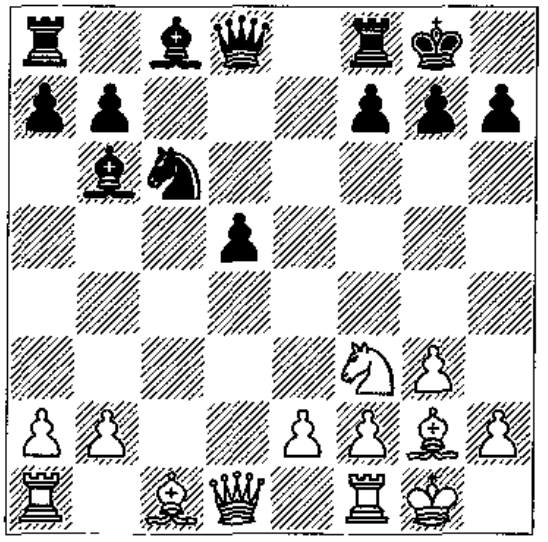
9 d4

It is pointless to delay this move any further.

9...0-0 10 dxc5 ♗xc5

This looks like a main-line Tarrasch, except that a pair of pieces have been exchanged – White's queen's knight, and Black's king's knight. I feel this should favour White for, as is well-known, the IQP becomes more of a problem as play approaches an endgame. These positions should be compared with the introduction to Chapter 6.

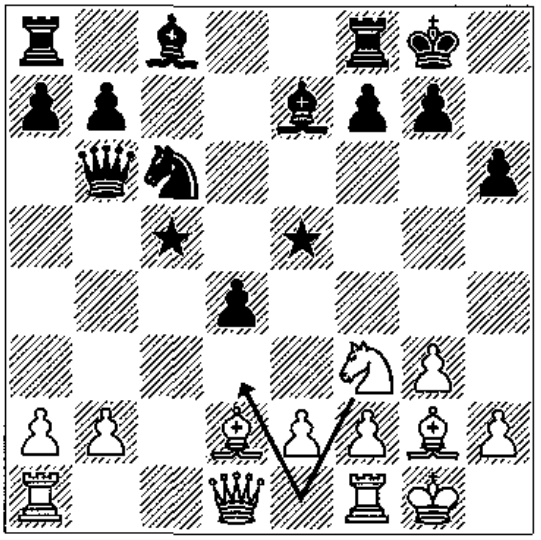
White's strategy – the fight for d4



The battle for control of d4 is paramount to White's future prospects, and is central to the idea of controlling the IQP: first blockade, then destroy. At the moment, Black has the square firmly under control, and he will try to keep it that way.

White can best contend for the square by winning control of the g1-a7 diagonal. To do this he can sometimes play ♕b3, or ♕c1, and then ♗e3. This is particularly effective if the d5-pawn cannot advance (if it is pinned, for instance). White has another typical method of fighting for d4: he plays e3, then ♗d2-c3, and either ♘d4 or, perhaps more strongly, ♗d4, preferring to establish the knight on d4.

The secondary blockading square

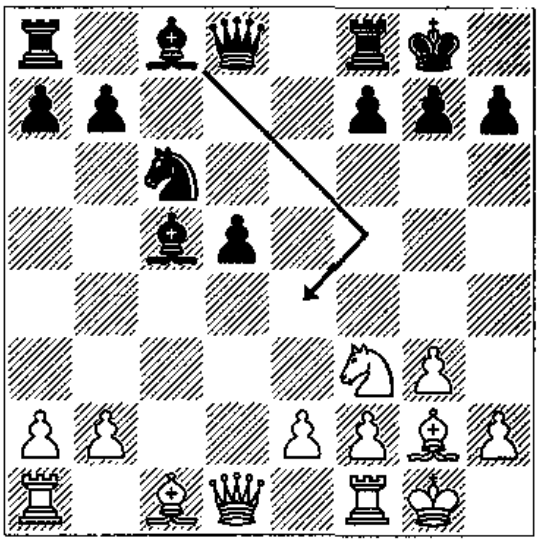


Sometimes Black will advance his d-pawn. This will give him more space, and he may be able to pressurize White's e2-pawn more easily. However, this changes quite a lot of the cards in his position: his queen's bishop becomes 'good', and his king's bishop suddenly finds its diagonals impeded.

How should White react? The manoeuvre ♘f3-e1-d3 is very effective as the knight is comfortable on d3, its favoured blockading square, free from being molested by pawns, and able to influence the squares b4, c5, f4 and e5.

Black's light-squared bishop development

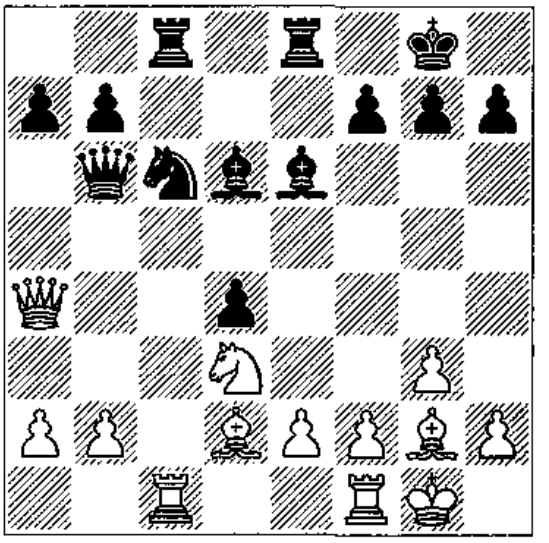
This is an important piece for Black, in that it can easily become a liability as it moves on the same colour complex of squares as the d5-pawn. Often it ends up on the passive square e6, defending the IQP.



However, Black has an important manoeuvre, ...♗f5-e4, activating his potentially weakest piece, and protecting the d-pawn.

Tactics – embarrassing the queen

W



Wl. Schmidt – Blauert
Næstved 1988

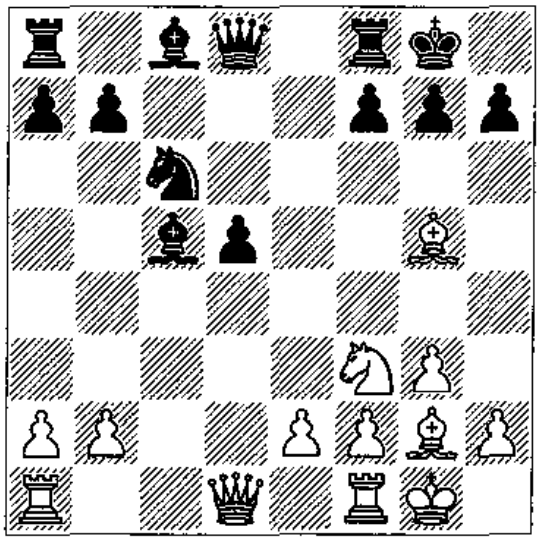
The black queen often goes to the active square b6, as we see here. However, White has an interesting counter: he plays 17 b4!, a strong move, ostensibly creating a square for the knight

on c5, but really threatening b5, winning a piece, for if the black knight moves from c6, then White can play ♗a5, winning the black queen. The game continued 17...♗g4? 18 b5 ♗xe2 19 bxc6 bxc6 20 ♗xc6 with a winning advantage for White.

We now return to the theoretical debate:

11 ♗g5 *(D)*

B



The key position. White develops his queen's bishop with gain of tempo. There are several ways by which Black can counter this attack on his queen:

A: 11...f6 104
B: 11...♕b6 106
C: 11...♗e7?! 107
D: 11...♕d7!? 107

A)

11...f6

The most radical choice, but this move does weaken the black kingside and the a2-g8 diagonal.

12 ♗d2 ♗f5

Black intends to bring the bishop to e4. Alternatives:

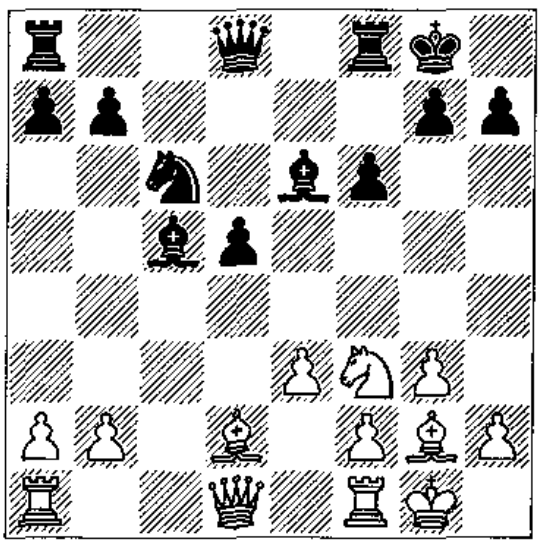
a) 12...♖e8 13 ♖c1 ♗b6 14 e3 ♗f5 15 ♗c3 ♗e4 16 ♕b3 ♔h8 17 ♖fd1 ♕e7 18 ♗d4! (White decides that he would prefer to have a knight on d4, rather than his bishop) 18...♘a5 (18...♘xd4 19 ♘xd4 ♗xg2 20 ♔xg2 would allow White a nagging advantage in a static position) 19 ♕c3 ♘c4 20 ♗xb6 ♘xb6 21 b3 ♕a3 22 ♘d4 ♖ac8 23 ♕d2 and White's position is preferable, Larsen-Agdestein, Gausdal 1985.

b) 12...♗b6 13 e3 ♗f5 14 ♗c3 ♗e4, Bern-Butnorius, Oslo 1992, and, by analogy with the preceding Larsen game, 15 ♕b3 should be tried.

c) 12...♕e7 13 ♗c3 ♖d8 14 e3 ♗f5 15 ♖c1 ♗e4 16 ♖e1 ♗b6 17 a3 with the habitual long-term edge to White, Agdestein-Alburt, Taxco IZ 1985.

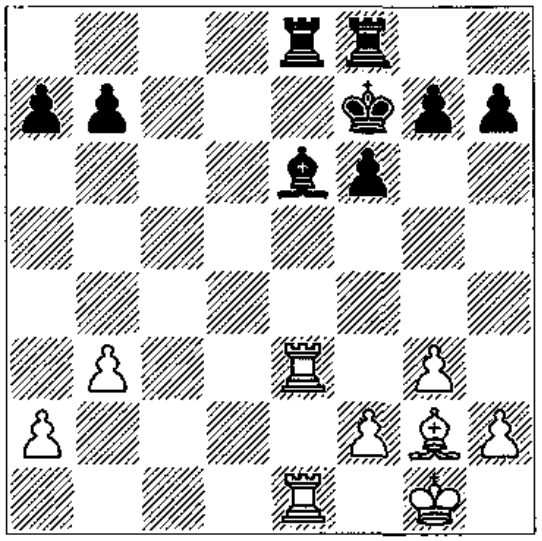
d) 12...♗e6 13 e3 *(D)* with the following split:

B



d1) 13...d4? does not equalize: 14 exd4 ♘xd4 15 ♗e3 ♘xf3+ 16 ♕xf3

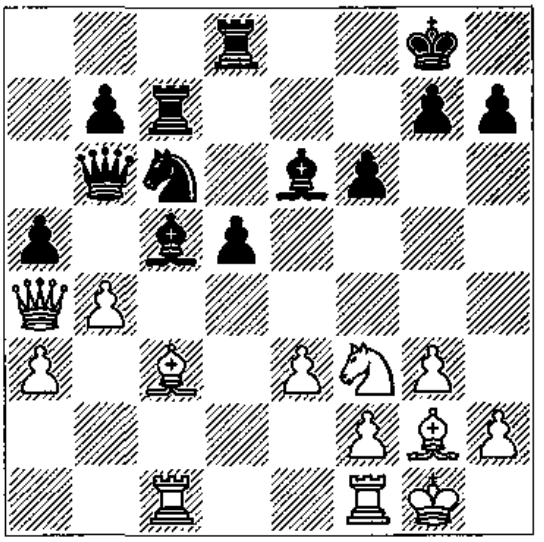
♕b6 (16...♗xe3 17 ♕xe3 ♖e8 lost in amusing fashion in Kleberc-Rybak, Czech Cht 1998: 18 ♗xb7 ♗d5? 19 ♕xe8+! ♕xe8 20 ♗xd5+ ♔f8 21 ♖fe1 ♕d8 22 ♗xa8 with a winning material advantage) 17 ♖fe1 ♗xe3 18 ♕xe3 ♕xe3 19 ♖xe3 ♔f7 20 b3 ♖ae8 21 ♖ae1 *(D)*.



White wins quickly because of the unpleasant threat of ♖xe6, Larsen-Yusupov, Reykjavik 1985.

d2) 13...♕d7 14 ♗c3 ♖ad8 is met by Larsen's favourite manoeuvre, 15 ♗d4 ♘xd4 16 ♘xd4 ♗h3 17 ♖c1 ♗xg2 18 ♔xg2 ♗b6 19 ♕d3 with a firm grip on the d4-square, Larsen-Jacobs, Lugano 1989.

d3) 13...♕b6 14 ♖c1 ♖ac8 (once more, liquidating the isolated d-pawn by 14...d4 backfires, as White's pieces are well-placed to exploit the open lines, and the a2-g8 diagonal is weak – Black's position would be better with his pawn back on f7! 15 exd4 ♘xd4 16 b4 ♘xf3+ 17 ♕xf3 ♗d6 18 a3 ♖f7 19 ♕d3 ♗f8 20 ♗e3, Chernin-Dlugy, Tunis IZ 1985) 15 a3 a5 16 ♗c3 ♖fd8 17 ♕a4 ♖c7? 18 b4! *(D)*.



Oops! There is that tactic again. 18...axb4 19 axb4 ♗f8? 20 b5 ♕a7 (if the knight moves, ♗a5 is fatal) 21 ♕xa7 ♘xa7 22 b6 forking two pieces, Kuszewski-Abramowicz, corr 1992.

e) 12...d4?! (the open a2-g8 diagonal allows White to develop a serious queenside initiative) 13 b4! ♗b6 14 a4 a5 15 b5 ♘e5 16 ♕b3+ ♔h8 17 e3! (opening up the position to exploit his more active pieces) 17...♗h3!? (17...♘xf3+ 18 ♗xf3 ♗h3 19 ♗xb7 ♗xf1 20 ♗xa8 dxe3 21 ♗xe3 ♗xe3 22 ♕xe3 ♗xb5 23 axb5 ♕xa8 24 ♕c3 is good for White) 18 exd4 ♗xg2 19 ♔xg2 ♘xf3 20 ♕xf3 ♗xd4 21 ♖ac1! ♖f7 22 ♖fd1 ♖d7 23 ♕g4! ♖d5 24 ♗xa5! winning, Makarov-Dvoirys, USSR 1989.

13 ♕b3 ♗b6 14 ♗e3

As 14...d4 is clearly illegal.

14...♘a5

Black tries to improve on 14...♗xe3 15 ♕xe3 ♖e8 16 ♕b3 ♘a5 17 ♕b5 a6

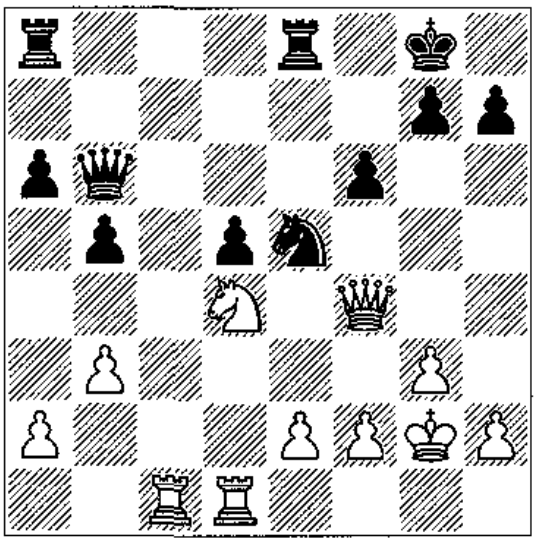
18 ♕b4 ♗e4 19 ♖ac1 with similar play, Groszpeter-Farago, Budapest 1986.

15 ♕c3 ♗xe3 16 ♕xe3 ♖e8 17 ♕c5 b6

Note the typical tactical point that 17...♖xe2?? loses to 18 ♘d4 ♖e5 19 f4.

18 ♕b5 a6 19 ♕a4 b5 20 ♕f4 ♗e4 21 ♖ac1 ♘c4 22 b3 ♘e5 23 ♘d4 ♗xg2 24 ♔xg2 ♕b6 25 ♖fd1 *(D)*

B



Kramnik-Kengis, Riga Tal mem 1995. White later won by infiltrating along the c-file.

B)

11...♕b6

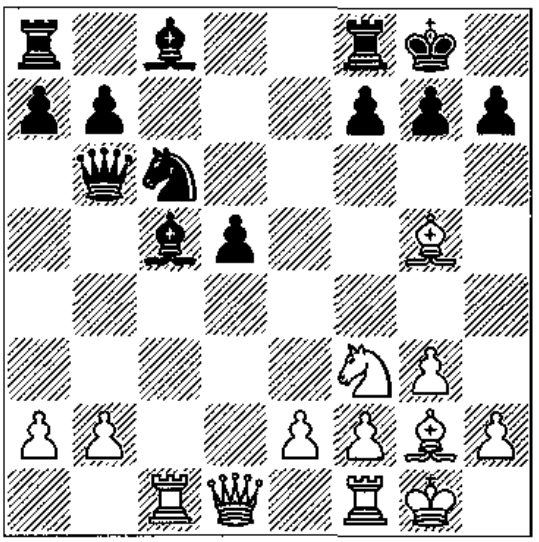
This avoids the weakening ...f6, but deprives the exposed c5-bishop of its natural square of retreat, b6.

12 ♖c1 *(D)*

White immediately directs his rook at the c5-bishop. The point is that 12 ♕xd5 ♗e6 13 ♕d2 allows 13...h6 14 ♗e3 ♗xe3 15 ♕xe3 ♕xb2 16 ♖fb1 ♕f6, when Black is fine, Barbero-Dlugy, Mendoza U-26 Wcht 1985.

12...d4

B



Now White really was threatening to take the d-pawn, as the c5-bishop would be hanging, e.g. 12...♖e8? 13 ♕xd5 ♗f8 14 ♕d2 ♕a6 15 ♘d4 ♘xd4 16 ♕xd4 ♕xe2 17 ♖c7 h6 18 ♗e3 ♖e7 19 ♖xe7 ♗xe7 20 ♕e4 ♗f8 21 ♕e8, with a crushing advantage, Bilek-Flesch, Hungarian Ch 1965, or 12...h6? 13 ♕xd5 ♗e7 14 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 15 ♕c5 ♘c6 16 ♕xb6 axb6 with a solid pawn more in the endgame, Cu.Hansen-H.Olafsson, Espoo Z 1989.

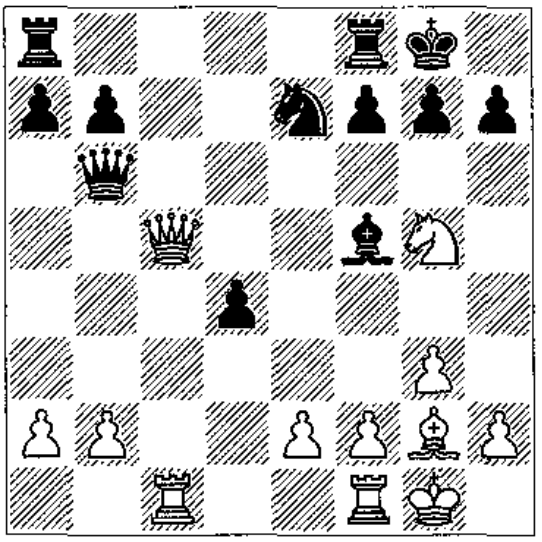
12...♗e6 is the other reasonable method of defending d5. 13 ♕c2 ♗d6 (13...♗e7 14 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 15 ♕c7 ♘c6 16 ♕xb6 axb6 17 a3 leads to the type of ending that White wants, Van der Sterren-Brunner, Munich 1990) 14 ♗e3 ♕b4 15 ♘g5 (15 ♖fd1, controlling d4, also has its points) 15...g6 16 ♘xe6 fxe6 should be better for White, even though the typical pawn-thrust, e4, is difficult to arrange, J.Magnusson-B.Andersson, Stockholm Rilton Cup 1987.

13 ♕c2 ♗d6 14 ♘d2 ♗e6 15 ♘e4!?

Further harassing the black dark-squared bishop.

15...♗e7 16 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 17 ♘g5 ♗f5 18 ♕c5 *(D)*

B



18...♖fe8 19 b4

White has a safe plus, Illescas-Lautier, Dos Hermanas 1994.

C)

11...♗e7?!

I feel that this is a positional blunder, exchanging Black's better bishop. White normally has to go to some lengths to achieve this swap, so it is no surprise that 12 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 13 ♕d2 ♖d8 14 e3 ♗f5 15 ♖ac1 leads to a pleasant advantage for White, without risk, Rogers-Kelečević, Eerbeek 1978.

D)

11...♕d7!?

This move looks ugly, but Black considers that it is worthwhile wasting a tempo to avoid the ...f6 weakening. He will continue with ...h6, and then put the queen on a better square – e7 for instance.

12 ♘e1

A standard manoeuvre: the knight is coming to d3 and, possibly, f4.

12...d4

Or 12...h6 when 13 ♗f4 ♖d8 14 ♘d3 ♗b6 15 ♖c1, with a typical edge for White, is better than the 13 ♗d2 ♗b6 14 ♘d3 ♕d6! of Wl.Schmidt-Greenfeld, Moscow OL 1994.

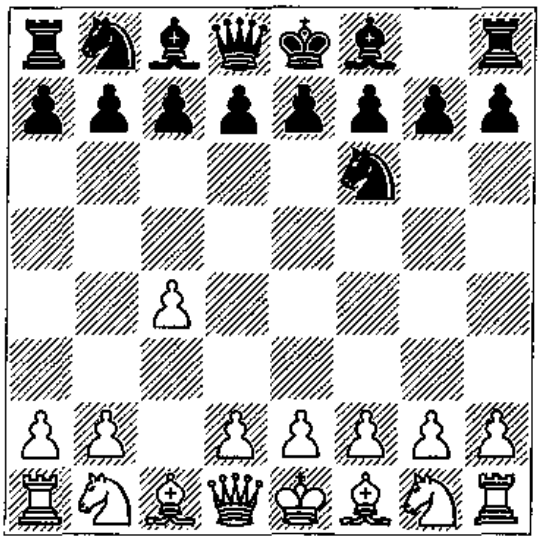
13 ♘d3 ♗b6 14 ♗d2 ♕e7 15 ♘f4 ♗e6 16 ♕a4 ♖ac8 17 ♖ac1 ♖fd8 18 ♖fe1

White has a plus, Kramnik-Anand, Monaco Amber blindfold 1995.

Part 3: Other First Moves for Black

Apart from 1...♘f6, none of these moves feature in most books on the English. Very convenient for the respective authors, of course, but not too good for the reader, as this will not stop your opponent from playing them!

1 c4 ♘f6 *(D)*



You are likely to meet this move in about 30% of your games. It is, without doubt, the single most popular reply. However, play will almost certainly transpose into one of the other chapters on move two.

This is the most 'English' of the various alternatives, as each of the other popular replies to 1 c4 implies that Black would prefer to play something else:

a) 1...f5, intending to play a Dutch Defence, is Chapter 12.

b) King's Indian players will more than likely try 1...g6, or 1...♘f6 2 g3 g6 – Chapter 13.

c) 1...c6, or, less usually, 1...♘f6 2 g3 c6 (2...e5 transposes to the Keres System, Chapter 6), where Black hopes for a Slav Defence, is dealt with in Chapter 14.

d) 1...e6, or, once again, 1...♘f6 2 g3 e6, hoping for one of the various systems in the Queen's Gambit Declined, is covered in Chapter 15, except for those lines where Black plays a quick ...c5, e.g. 3 ♗g2 c5 4 ♘f3 leading to Chapter 10, the Keres-Parma Variation. 1...e6 2 g3 f5 transposes to Chapter 12.

e) 1...b6 – Chapter 16.

2 g3

In order to be consistent, White must play this move, as 2 ♘c3 can be answered by 2...e5, for instance, and if White tries to return to Chapter 4, by 3 g3 ♗b4 4 ♗g2, Black will avoid the move 4...♘c6, and instead play the superior 4...0-0.

2...d5

This move gives 1...♘f6 its own character. Other moves will bring us to

separate sections, for instance 2...c6 (a 10% likelihood), 2...e6 (a 19% likelihood), 2...g6 (a 22% likelihood) – see the note to move one. In fact, after 1...♘f6, play is most likely to transpose to Part 1, as 2...e5 occurs a staggering 36% of the time.

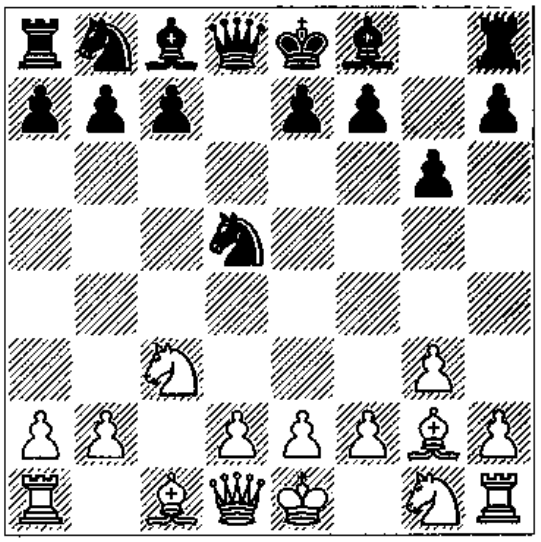
3 cxd5 ♘xd5 4 ♗g2 g6

4...c5 transposes to the Rubinstein System, Chapter 9, and 4...e5 to the Reversed Dragon, Chapter 5.

With the text-move, Black aims for Grünfeld-type play.

5 ♘c3 *(D)*

B



We have reached the starting point of the next chapter.

11 The Pseudo-Grünfeld System: 1...♘f6 and 2...d5

1 c4 ♘f6 2 g3 d5 3 cxd5 ♘xd5 4 ♗g2 g6 5 ♘c3

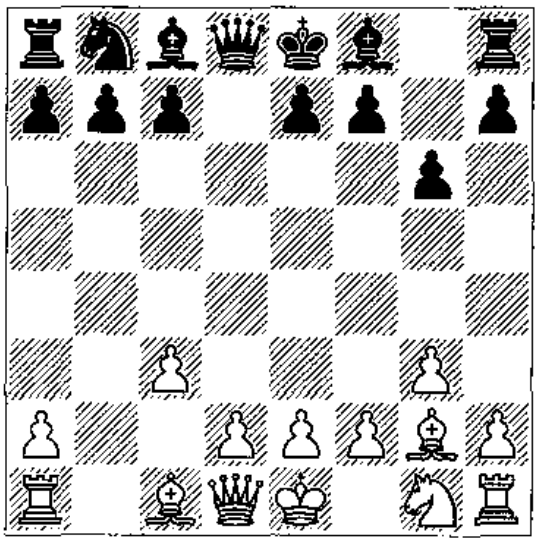
White immediately challenges the advanced knight. Black has two sensible replies:

A: 5...♘xc3 110
B: 5...♘b6 112

A)

5...♘xc3 6 bxc3 *(D)*

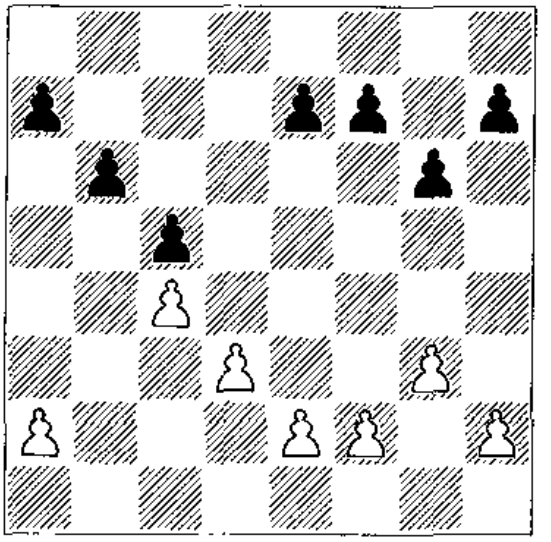
B



This is a line that is popular with Grünfeld players, as they are expecting White to play d4 at some stage, when they will get the sort of position they want. I feel that White should certainly be better in the diagram position, for his centre is strengthened, and he is given use of the b-file.

White's strategy

In fact, White will only play d4 if it is good for him; otherwise he will keep his pawns intact.

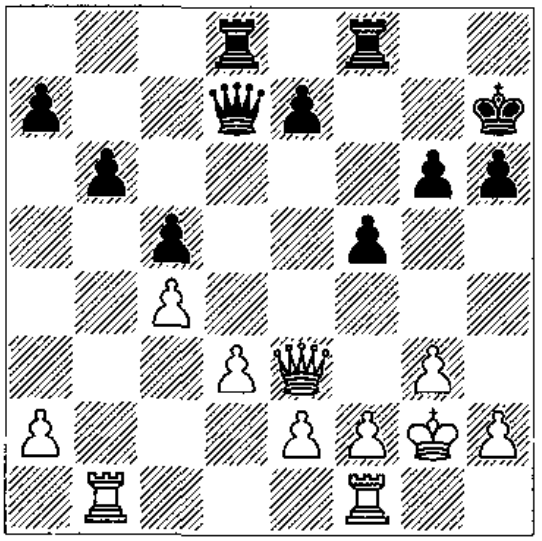


The structure d3, c4 is a very good one, as White thereby keeps his kingside pawns solidly together. He will place his rook on the half-open b-file, and rely on piece-play.

The minority attack

The one potential problem in the white position is his isolated a-pawn. Like many isolated pawns, though, this singleton may be statically weak, but it contains a great deal of dynamic

strength. By advancing the pawn a4-a5, White seriously compromises the black queenside structure.



Matera – Gaprindashvili
Amsterdam 1976

24 a4! e5 25 a5 ♕c6+ 26 ♔g1 ♖fe8 27 axb6 axb6 28 ♖a1 ♖a8 29 ♖fb1

White has created a serious weakness on b6, and ridded himself of his a-pawn.

Back to the theory after 1 c4 ♘f6 2 g3 d5 3 cxd5 ♘xd5 4 ♗g2 g6 5 ♘c3 ♘xc3 6 bxc3:

6...♗g7

6...c5 brings us to Chapter 9, note 'a' to Black's fifth move, where White's play is very similar.

7 ♖b1

'Rook to the open file', threatening 8 ♖xb7 (and not 8 ♗xb7??, because of the fork 8...♗xb7 9 ♖xb7 ♕d5).

7...♘d7

Or 7...c6 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 0-0 b6 10 c4 ♗b7 (10...♕c7 11 a4 ♖d8 12 d3 ♗b7 13 a5 ♘d7 14 ♗g5 ♖e8 15 ♗h3 e6 16 ♗f4 e5 17 ♗e3 f5 18 axb6 axb6 19 ♗xb6 ♘xb6 20 ♕b3 picks up a pawn, Ljubojević-Chiburdanidze, Linares 1988) 11 ♗b2 c5 12 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 13 d3 ♘d7 14 a4 (structurally, Black is worse as he has no long-term defence against the move a5, which will produce a weakness on the queenside) 14...♕c7 15 a5 ♗c6 16 ♕d2 bxa5 17 ♘h4 ♗xg2 18 ♘xg2 a4 19 ♘e3 ♘b6 20 ♖b5 ♕c6 21 ♖fb1 ♖ac8 22 ♖a5 ♖c7 23 ♖bb5 ♕d6 24 ♘d1, followed by ♘b2xa4, when Black's two queenside pawn islands will be condemned, Serper-Zugić, North Bay 1998.

8 ♘f3

Stumbling into the cage by 8 ♗xb7? ♗xb7 9 ♖xb7 ♘b6 would be embarrassing.

8...0-0

8...♘b6 9 0-0 0-0 transposes.

9 0-0 ♘b6

Reaching the basic position. Otherwise:

a) 9...c5 10 ♕a4! ♕c7 (10...h6 11 ♕a3 ♕c7 12 d4, Hübner-Savon, Sukhumi 1972, is similarly bad for Black) 11 d4 ♘b6 12 ♕a3 cxd4 13 cxd4 ♗g4 14 ♗f4 ♕d7 15 ♖fd1 ♖fd8 16 ♖bc1 ♘d5 17 ♘e5 ♕e6 18 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 19 ♘xg4 ♕xg4 20 ♕xe7 picks up the e-pawn and the game, Kallai-Roos, Kobanya 1992.

b) 9...♖b8 10 d4 b6 11 e4 e5 12 ♖e1 c5 13 a4 ♗a6 (13...cxd4 14 cxd4 exd4 would allow 15 ♗f4) 14 d5 h6 15 ♗f1 ♗xf1 16 ♖xf1 ♘f6 and now, rather than 17 ♘d2?!, as in the game

Hübner-Gutman, Bundesliga 1987/8, it is important to stop the black knight from coming to d6, so 17 ♕e2! ♘e8 18 ♘d2 ♕d7 19 ♗a3 ♘d6 and now 20 ♘c4 ♘b7 21 a5 b5 22 a6.

10 ♘g5!

A powerful move, and one that is far from evident. The knight sets off towards the c5-square. Once it arrives there, Black will have great difficulties completing his queenside development.

10...♕d7

Intending ...♕f5, controlling c5. The alternatives fail to obstruct the white plan:

a) 10...♖e8?! 11 ♘e4 ♗d7 12 ♘c5 ♗c6 13 e4 e5 14 ♕b3 ♕c8 15 f4 a5 16 fxe5 with a great advantage, Ftačnik-Gutman, Thessaloniki OL 1984.

b) 10...♖b8 11 ♕c2 ♗d7 12 d3 ♗a4 13 ♕d2 ♕d7 14 c4 with an advantage, Adorjan-Popović, Vrbas 1980. Play continued 14...♖fd8? 15 c5 ♘d5 16 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 17 ♗xd5+ ♕xd5 18 ♕f4+, recuperating his piece, having exposed the opposing king.

c) 10...♗f5 11 d3 ♖b8 12 c4 ♕e8 13 ♗f4 e5 14 ♗d2 f6 15 ♘e4 ♗d7 16 ♘c3 ♗c6 17 ♘d5 ♖f7 18 ♕b3 f5 19 ♘xc7! ♖xc7 20 c5+ ♕f7 21 cxb6 axb6 22 ♖fc1 achieving a winning ending, Kallai-Liss, Budapest 1995.

d) 10...♕e8 11 ♕c2 h6 12 ♘e4 ♗d7 13 ♘c5 ♗c6 14 e4 ♖b8 15 d4 ♘d7 (attempting to stop d5, but...) 16 ♘e6! fxe6 17 d5 exd5 18 exd5 ♗xd5 19 ♗xd5+ ♔h7 20 ♖xb7 when White has two powerful bishops, and a better pawn-structure, Smejkal-Gutman, Bundesliga 1983.

11 ♕b3

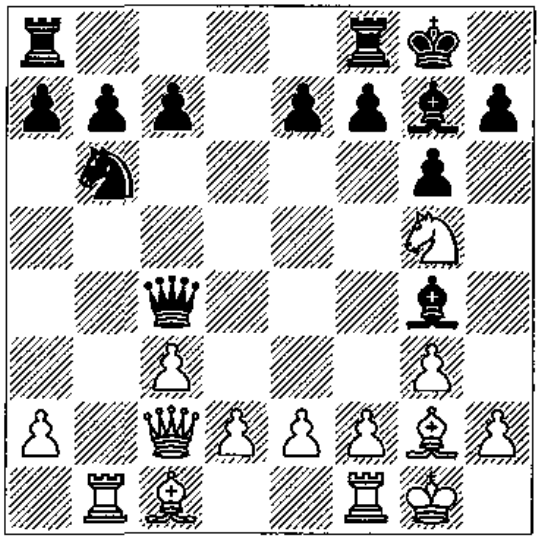
11 ♘e4 is now met by 11...♖d8.

11...♕g4 12 ♘f3 ♗e6 13 ♕c2

Planning to drive back the advanced black forces by ♖b4, and then ♘d4.

13...♕c4 14 ♘g5! ♗g4 *(D)*

If 14...♕xa2 then 15 ♖b2 ♕a6 16 ♘xe6 fxe6 17 ♕e4 is overwhelming.



15 ♗xb7! ♖ab8 16 ♗f3 ♗xf3 17 exf3 h6 18 ♘h3 ♘d5 19 ♖b3 f5 20 ♗a3 ♖fd8 21 ♖e1 ♗f6 22 d3 ♕c6 23 c4 ♖xb3 24 axb3 g5?! 25 d4 e6 26 ♖e2 ♘b6 27 d5 exd5 28 ♕xf5

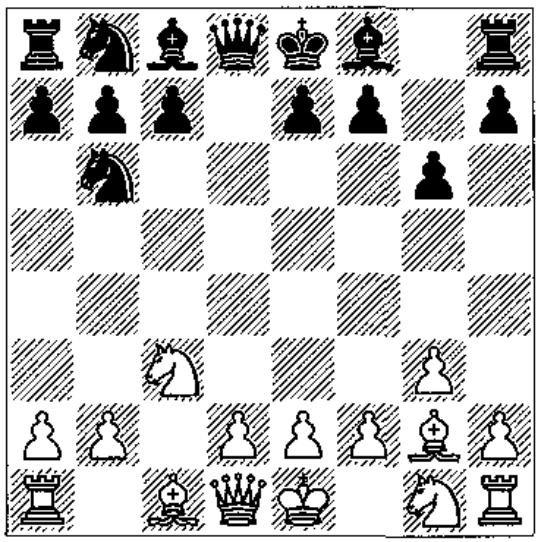
White has ripped open the black king position, Ribli-Gutman, Bundesliga 1986/7.

B)

5...♘b6 *(D)*

6 d3 ♗g7 7 ♗e3

Quite a brutal move. White will try to play ♗h6, swapping Black's powerful dark-squared bishop, and then h4-h5, exploiting the absence of Black's



king's knight from its post on the kingside.

7...0-0

The most natural reply. Alternatively:

a) 7...♘c6 8 ♕d2 (White threatens ♗xc6+, wrecking Black's queenside formation, but giving up the bishop-pair, followed immediately by ♗h6, which takes away the bishop-pair from Black by exchanging one of them; if played in the other order by 8 ♗xc6+ bxc6 9 ♕c1 Black will continue 9...h6 of course, keeping his bishops on the board) 8...♘d4 (parrying White's threat; 8...0-0 transposes into the next bracket) 9 ♖c1 0-0 (9...♘f5 10 ♗c5 0-0 11 ♘f3 c6 12 0-0 Betaneli-Saleh, North Bay 1998, leads to a sort of 'Dragon' position, where the black pieces are misplaced; 9...e5 10 ♗h6 0-0 Bischoff-Seger, Gladenbach 1997, and now 11 h4 is tempting) 10 ♗h6 ♗xh6 11 ♕xh6 c6 12 ♘f3 ♘xf3+ 13 ♗xf3 ♕d4 14 h4 f6, and now, instead of the blunder 15 h5?, trapping his own queen after 15...g5, as in Matera-Martz, USA 1976, 15 ♕f4 is a good move, heading for a promising ending.

b) 7...h6?! (this avoids the exchange of bishops, but after White's next, Black will have problems castling) 8 ♕c1 ♘8d7 9 ♘f3 ♘f6 10 0-0 c6 11 ♖b1 a5 12 b3, and Black still has not managed to solve the problem of his king, Miles-Tisdall, Lone Pine 1976.

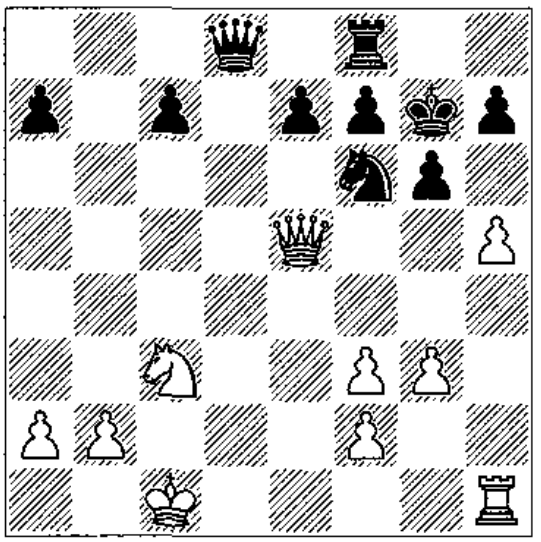
8 ♕d2 ♖e8!?

Black attempts to preserve his dark-square defender. Others:

a) 8...e5 9 ♗h6 ♘8d7 10 h4 ♘f6 11 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 12 h5 ♘xh5 13 ♗f3 ♕e7 14 ♗xh5 gxh5 15 ♖xh5 with a clear edge for White, Petrosian-Tukmakov, USSR 1973.

b) 8...♘8d7 (Black rushes the b8-knight over to the kingside) 9 ♘f3 ♖e8 (9...♘f6 10 ♗h6 a5 11 0-0 c6 12 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 13 ♖ab1 with a pull, Larsen-Hort, Amsterdam 1980) 10 ♗h6 e5 11 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 12 0-0 ♘f6 13 b4 ♕e7 14 ♕b2 a5 15 a3 a4 16 ♖ac1 and Black is close to equality, Adorjan-Vaganian, Linares 1985.

c) 8...♘c6?! (this allows White to put his 'positional plan' into action) 9 ♗xc6 bxc6 10 ♗h6 c5 11 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 12 ♘f3 ♗b7 13 ♕e3 c4 14 0-0-0 ♗xf3 15 exf3 cxd3 16 ♖xd3 ♕e8 (Black has managed to eradicate one of his weak c-pawns, but at a cost: the white position is very active, and he now resorts to the 'tactical plan') 17 h4 ♖d8 18 ♖xd8 ♕xd8 19 h5 ♘d5 20 ♕e5+ ♘f6 *(D)*.



21 h6+ ♔g8 22 ♖d1 ♕e8 23 ♘d5 and Black can resign with a clear conscience, Serper-Alterman, Manila OL 1992.

9 ♗h6 ♗h8 10 h4 c6

This is a key component of Black's scheme. If, instead, 10...♘8d7 11 ♘f3 e5?! then 12 h5 ♘f6 13 hxg6 hxg6 14 ♗g5 (a very awkward pin) 14...c6 15 0-0-0 ♕d6 16 ♖h4 ♘bd5 17 ♘e4 ♕e6, Hirzel-M.Přibyl, Ticino 1991, when White could have killed the game with 18 ♖xh8+ ♔xh8 19 ♗xf6+ ♘xf6 20 ♕h6+ ♔g8 21 ♖h1 ♘h5 22 ♘fg5.

11 h5 ♘d5

This is his sound idea, conserving the dark-squared bishop, and obtaining counterplay along the a1-h8 diagonal.

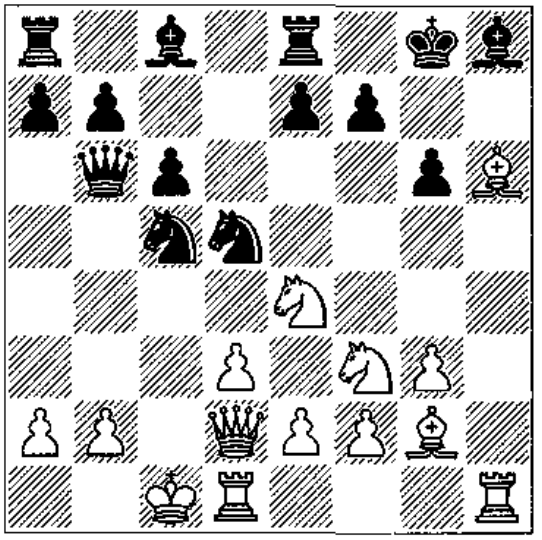
12 ♘f3

12 hxg6 hxg6 13 ♘f3 ♘d7 14 ♘g5 ♘7f6 15 ♗f3 ♗g4 16 ♘xd5 cxd5 17 0-0-0 ♕b6 was OK for Black in Serper-Ganguly, Calcutta 1995 – an infamous game.

12...♘d7 13 ♘e4 ♕b6 14 0-0-0 ♘c5?

Black does not see what is going to strike him. 14...♘7f6 is more circumspect.

15 hxg6 hxg6 *(D)*



16 ♗f8!! ♗xb2+

Forced as 16...♖xf8 allows mate in eight: 17 ♖xh8+ ♔xh8 18 ♕h6+ ♔g8 19 ♖h1, etc.

17 ♕xb2 ♕xb2+ 18 ♔xb2 ♘a4+ 19 ♔a3 f5 20 ♘eg5 ♘ac3 21 ♗h6

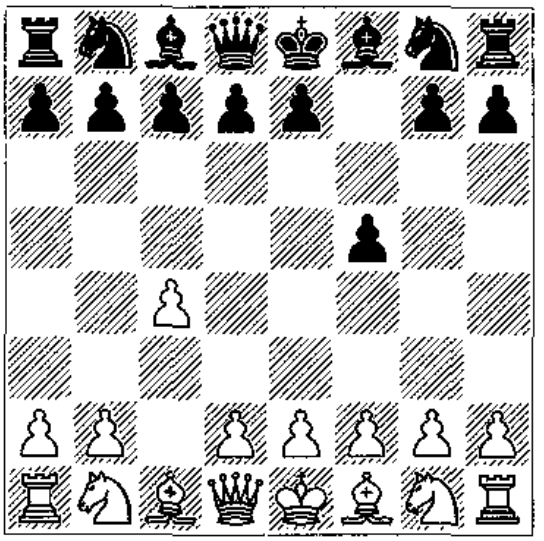
This is good, but 21 ♖h6 may be even stronger, for example 21...♘xd1 22 ♖xg6+ ♔xf8 23 ♘h7+ ♔f7 24 ♘e5#.

21...♘xd1 22 ♖xd1

White's two pieces prove far stronger than the rook, Kosten-Ganguly, Calcutta 1996.

12 The Dutch: 1...f5

1 c4 f5 *(D)*



Many players who enjoy employing the Dutch Defence against 1 d4 would also like to answer 1 c4 in the same manner. After 1 c4 f5 (which happens only about 3% of the time), taking control of the e5-square (and the centre) by 2 d4 is, indeed, a very logical reply. Personally though, I have always felt that this tended to play into the hands of 'Dutch' players, who, whether they are Leningrad or Stonewall or whatever players, will happily trot out their fifteen moves of theory and, presumably, achieve the kind of position they desire.

You may not think that the Dutch is a very good defence for Black, in which case transpose into a main line by all means. English players have various other possibilities at their disposal which have the merit of being both very dangerous, and annoying, for Black. He will probably have to think for himself quite early on in the game, and, hopefully, lose some time finding a decent plan.

White's strategy

White's plan involves playing his d-pawn to d3, and not to d4, and then striking with e4, just like in the Botvinnik System. In fact, Line B of this chapter should be compared with Chapter 1, and also Chapter 13, as many ideas overlap. In the main Dutch positions White needs to make a great deal of careful preparation to play e4; indeed, he might never be able to play it at all, for White's first move (1 d4) concedes control of the e4-square and Black's first move (1...f5) takes a firm hold on this same square. A later ...d5 will further extenuate Black's control, which is often demonstrated by the arrival, and subsequent entrenchment of a black knight on this square. When, or rather if, White does successfully achieve the e4 break, it often leads to his advantage. With the white d-pawn on d3, however, it is almost impossible to stop White playing e4 whenever he wants.

2 g3 ♘f6

Black has a wide choice of moves here, but almost invariably plays this natural knight move. He may still expect White to play d4 soon, transposing into a 'real' Dutch, with which Black is very familiar, no doubt.

3 ♗g2

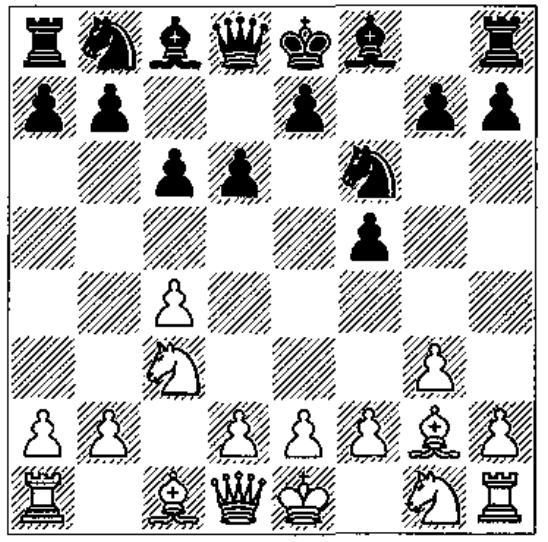
White completes the development of his fianchettoed bishop. As Black has such a large choice of possibilities on the next few moves it would seem difficult to know exactly the right way to play against each, but there is a fairly simple rule: White plays ♘c3, d3 and e4, followed by ♘ge2 and 0-0 with a Botvinnik set-up, if Black fianchettoes his king's bishop, except if Black fails to play ...♘c6, when White may be able to play a well-timed d4 (before playing d3, of course).

Now Black has a choice of two main moves, each leading to a different structure:

A: 3...e6 116
B: 3...g6 120

Alternatively, 3...e5 transposes to Chapter 7, Line C (4 d4!), and after 3...d6 4 ♘c3, 4...g6 (4...e5 transposes to Chapter 7) 5 d3 ♗g7 6 e4 will bring us to Chapter 1, should Black continue with ...e5 and ...♘c6, and Line B (this chapter), should he play ...e5, but refrain from ...♘c6. 4...c6 *(D)* might also transpose.

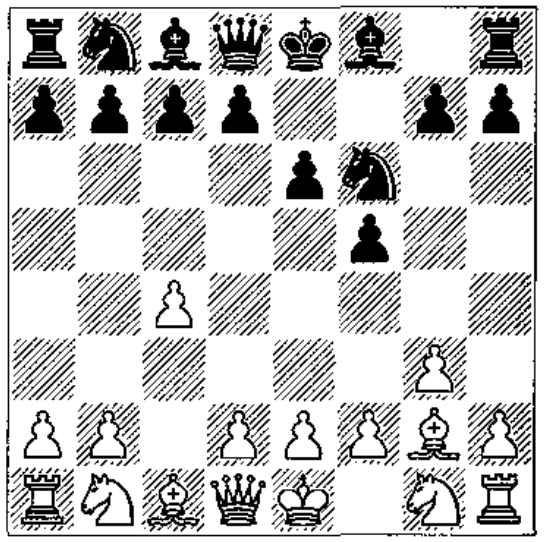
However, in Serper-Knežević, Moscow 1991, White managed to take advantage of Black's move-order by 5



e4! g6 (5...fxe4 6 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 7 ♗xe4 threatens ♕h5+) 6 exf5 ♗xf5 7 d4, managing to reach one of our standard positions, with a tempo more, as, instead of playing d3, e4, exf5, and then d4, White has played d4 in one go. The game continued 7...♘a6!? 8 a3! e5 9 ♘f3 exd4 10 ♘xd4 ♕e7+ 11 ♘ce2! ♗d7 12 0-0 ♕f7 13 ♘f4, intending ♖e1 and ♘e6, when Black was almost lost.

A)

3...e6 *(D)*



We can surmise from this move that Black is a fan of the Stonewall or Classical Variation. He has decided to play his favourite set-up no matter what, and refuses to take advantage of the possibility of playing ...e5.

4 ♘f3

For once, ♘c3 may not be the most flexible move here, as when Black plays ...d5, a later ...d4 may prove awkward for White. Now there is a further division:

A1: 4...d5 117
A2: 4...♗e7 119

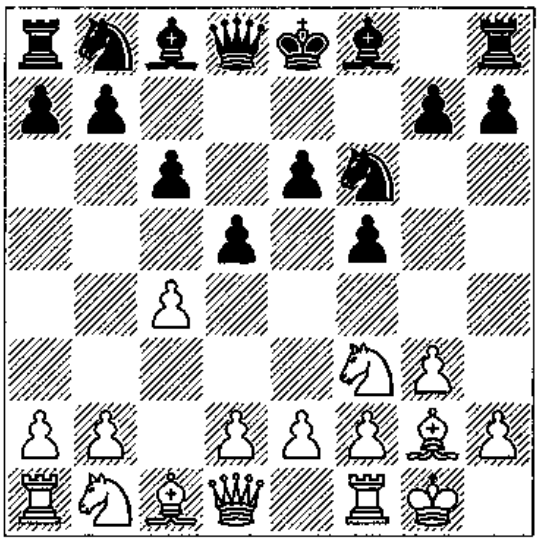
A1)

4...d5 5 0-0 c6 *(D)*

Consolidating the centre, and threatening to take the c-pawn in some lines. Obviously, the immediate 5...dxc4? would be wrong, for after 6 ♕a4+ and ♕xc4, Black will wish his f-pawn were still on f7, defending the e-pawn. Black can do without ...c6 for a while, but not for too long:

a) 5...♗d6 6 ♘c3 0-0 7 d3 ♘c6?! (7...c6) 8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♘b5 (9 ♕b3!?) 9...♗e7 10 ♗f4 ♘e8 11 ♕b3 ♔h8 12 ♖ac1 and Black is going backwards to his doom, Kramnik-Sorokin, Kherson 1991.

b) 5...♗e7 6 ♘c3 0-0 7 d3 ♔h8!? (7...♘c6 8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♗g5 h6?! 10 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 11 ♕b3 ♘e7 12 e4 ♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♔h7 14 exd5 ♘xd5 15 d4 ♗e6 16 c4 with a huge advantage for White, Hertneck-Keitlinghaus, Bundesliga 1990/1) 8 e4! d4 (8...fxe4 9 dxe4 dxc4 10 ♕a4 shows one of the disadvantages of omitting ...c6 – defending the c4-pawn with ...b5 is no longer possible) 9 ♘e2 fxe4?! 10 dxe4 c5 11 e5 ♘e8 12 ♘f4 ♘c6 13 h4 ♘c7 14 ♕e2 ♗d7 15 ♘g5!, moving over to the attack, Stohl-Keitlinghaus, Prague 1992.



W

6 d3

White normally has two good plans from this position: he can either play for a quick e4 – which is particularly effective if the black king's bishop is on d6, as there will be a threat of e5, winning a piece – or he can first develop his queen's bishop on b2, keeping the weakened a1-h8 diagonal firmly controlled, and only then play e4.

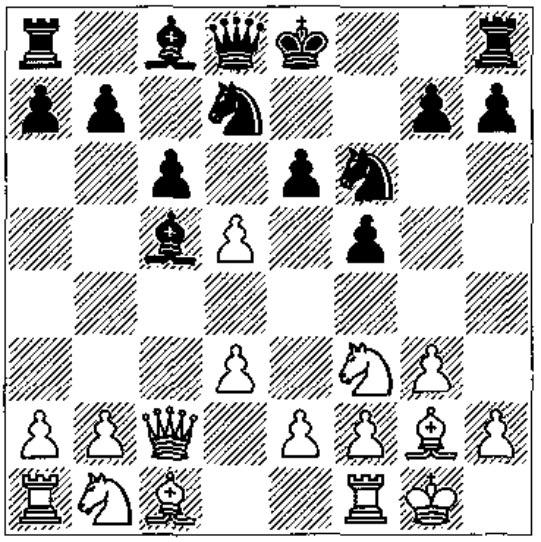
6...♗d6

Each possible development of the black king's bishop has its drawbacks, but this is the most popular. The other two:

a) 6...♗c5 7 ♕c2! (a little tactic that causes Black no end of problems: firstly, White intends cxd5, exposing

the attack on the bishop) 7...♘bd7 8 cxd5! *(D)*.

B

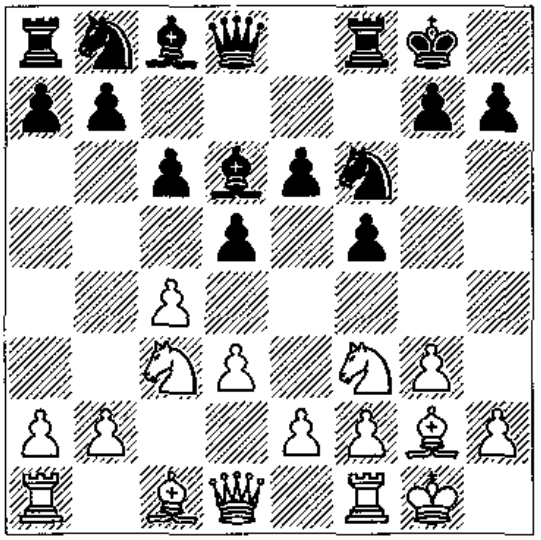


8...cxd5 (unfortunately for Black, he has to make this anti-positional capture, or after 8...exd5? 9 d4 simply lose his f-pawn) 9 ♘c3 0-0 10 ♗f4 ♕e7 11 ♘a4 ♗d6 12 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 13 ♖fc1 (White's advantage is already of nearly decisive proportions; infiltration along the c-file cannot be avoided) 13...f4 14 ♕c7 ♕e7 15 ♕xf4 e5 16 ♕d2 and White enjoys a solid extra pawn, Makarov-Arnold, Cappelle la Grande 1996.

b) 6...♗e7 7 b3 (playing for e4 has less effect here, as the black dark-squared bishop is less exposed, e.g. 7 ♘c3 0-0 8 e4 fxe4 9 dxe4 dxc4) 7...0-0 8 ♗b2 a5 (hoping to restrain any white queenside expansion; 8...♘a6 9 a3 ♗d7 10 ♕c2 ♗e8 11 e3 ♗h5 12 ♘c3 ♕e8 13 ♘e2 ♗d6 14 ♘e5 ♘d7 15 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 16 ♘f4 ♗xf4 17 exf4 ♖ad8, and now, in Espig-Knaak, E.Germany 1989, 18 b4, stopping the black knight from coming to d3, would have kept White on top) 9 ♘c3! ♘a6 10 a3 ♘c5 11 b4 axb4?! 12 axb4 ♖xa1 13 ♕xa1 ♘a6 14 b5 ♘c5 15 ♕a7, and the opening up of the queenside has only favoured White, Krasenkow-Kveinys, Polish Cht (Krynica) 1997.

7 ♘c3 0-0 *(D)*

W



8 cxd5

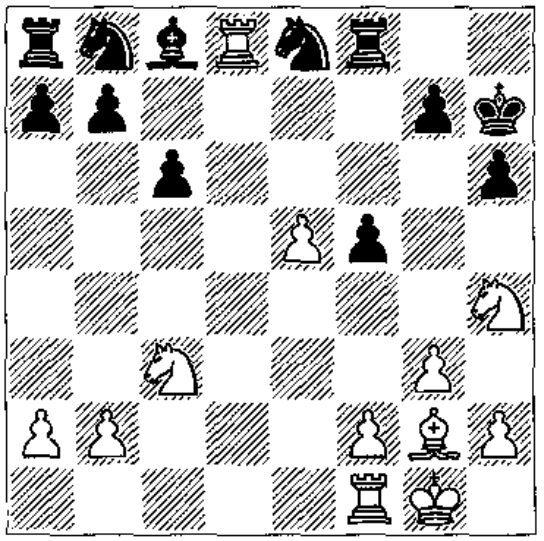
8 e4 is also appropriate, as 8...dxe4 (8...fxe4 9 dxe4 dxc4? would lose a piece to 10 e5) 9 dxe4 e5 (aiming for some activity in return for the pawn weakness; obviously 9...fxe4 10 ♘g5, followed by ♘xe4, would be very pleasant for White as the e4-square is his and e6 is feeble) 10 exf5 ♗xf5 11 ♗g5 ♘a6 12 ♘h4 ♗e6 13 ♗xf6 gxf6 14 ♕h5 ♕e8 15 ♕h6 f5 16 g4 ♗c7? 17 gxf5 ♗xf5 18 ♗e4 ♗xe4 19 ♘xe4 ♕e7 20 ♔h1 1-0 Krivoshei-Driamin, Yalta 1995, as ♖g1 will be decisive.

8...exd5 9 e4 dxe4 10 dxe4 ♗c5

10...fxe4?! is even more to White's taste: 11 ♘g5 ♕e7 12 ♘cxe4 ♘xe4 13 ♗xe4 ♗f5 14 ♖e1 ♕d7 15 ♕b3+ ♔h8 16 ♖d1 (the white initiative continues

unabated to the end of this, not very long, game) 16...♗g4 17 ♗f4! ♗xd1 18 ♖xd1 1-0 Blatny-Salai, Stary Smokovec 1990.

11 ♕b3+ ♔h8 12 e5 ♘e8 13 ♗g5 ♗e7 14 ♖ad1 ♕c7 15 ♕c4 ♗xg5 16 ♘xg5 ♕e7 17 ♕h4 h6 18 ♘f3 ♕xh4 19 ♘xh4 ♔h7 20 ♖d8 *(D)*



Managing to find room on Black's crowded back rank for a white rook, and so gaining an advantage, Kosten-Williams, British League (4NCL) 1997/8.

A2)

4...♗e7

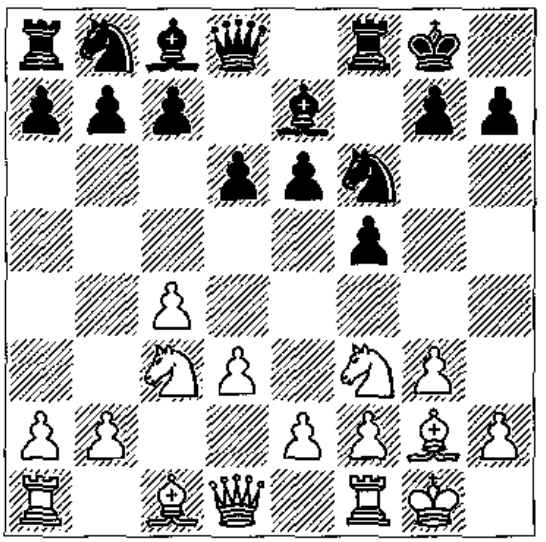
This keeps Black's plans for the central constellation unclear, but does commit the king's bishop.

5 0-0 0-0 6 ♘c3 d6

Either 6...d5 or 6...c6 followed by ...d5 will transpose to one of the notes in Line A1.

7 d3 *(D)*

Of course, many players cannot resist the possibility of 7 d4, once more changing the position to a main-line Dutch, but by the text-move White can still angle for e4.



7...♘c6

The most logical; others:

a) 7...♕e8 8 e4 fxe4 9 dxe4 e5 (this resembles a Botvinnik System, except that the white knight is on f3, and not e2, and that Black has lost one tempo by playing ...e5 in two goes, and his kingside is less actively placed) 10 ♘h4 (the 10 c5 ♔h8 11 cxd6 ♗xd6 of Barczay-Farago, Budapest 1965 was not too bad either) 10...♘c6 11 ♘f5 ♗d8 12 ♗e3 with advantage, Trifunović-Tot, Yugoslav Ch 1951.

b) 7...c6 8 e4 e5 9 c5 (making good use of the knight's pressure on e5) and after both 9...♘a6 10 cxd6 ♗xd6 11 d4 ♘xe4 12 dxe5 ♘xc3 13 bxc3 ♗e7 14 ♘d4 ♔h8 15 ♕e2 ♗c5 16 ♖e1 ♘c7 17 ♘b3 ♗e7 18 ♗e3, Yurtaev-Moskalenko, Riga 1988 and 9...dxc5 10 ♕b3+ ♔h8 11 ♘xe5 ♕d6 12 ♘c4 ♕e6 13 e5 ♘e8 14 f4 ♘c7 15 ♗e3 ♖d8 16 ♖ad1 ♕f7 17 d4 cxd4 18 ♖xd4

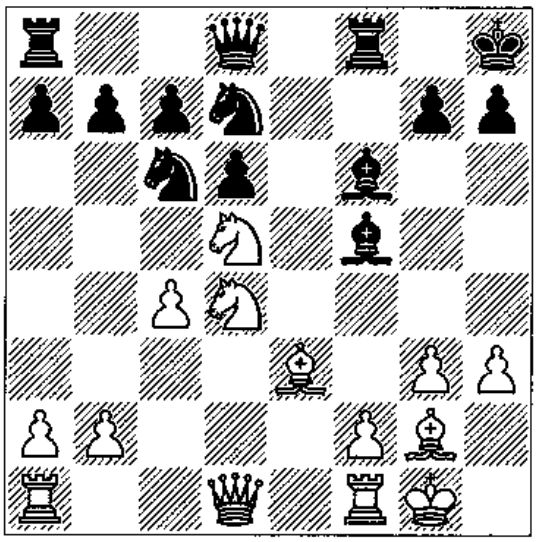
♖xd4 19 ♗xd4, Smejkal-Castro, Biel IZ 1976, White's big, passed, e-pawn gives him the upper hand.

8 e4 e5

As in the previous note, Black finds that he cannot make do without ...e5, so plays it anyway, thus losing a valuable tempo.

9 h3 ♔h8 10 exf5 ♗xf5 11 d4 ♘d7 12 ♘d5 ♗f6 13 ♗e3 exd4 14 ♘xd4 *(D)*

B



White's minor pieces are ideally placed, Timman-Padevsky, Nice OL 1974.

B)

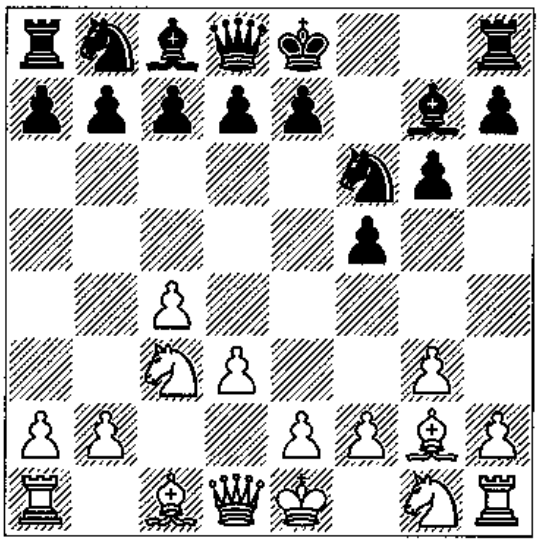
3...g6 4 ♘c3 ♗g7 5 d3 *(D)*

There goes White's last chance to play d4, and transpose into a Leningrad.

5...0-0 6 e4

White places his pawns in a Botvinnik System formation again. Play will be similar to that of Chapter 1, into which we will transpose, should Black play ...e5 and ...♘c6. The plans

B

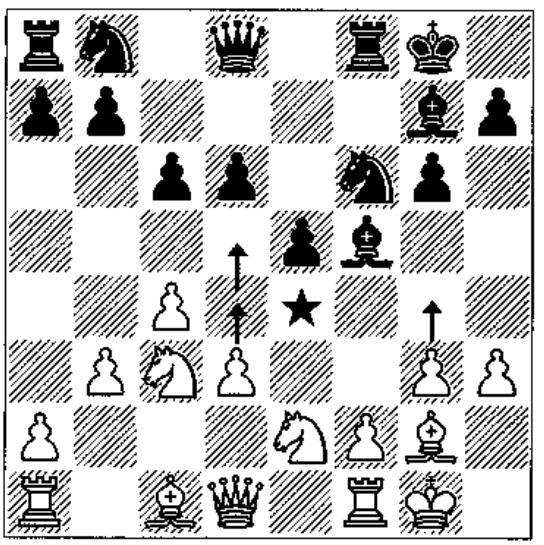


of Chapter 1 are applicable here as well; in particular Line B of that chapter should be examined in conjunction with this section.

The stratagem for gaining domination of e4

White's main plan involves capturing on f5 at an appropriate moment. Normally, Black has two ways of recapturing. In this case he has taken with his queen's bishop.

W



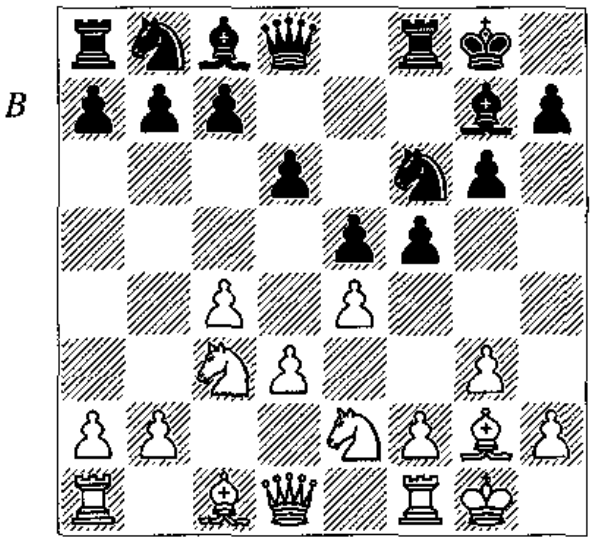
White has played the subtle move h3. His plan now comes in two parts:

first he intends playing an appropriate g4, with ♘g3 to follow later, controlling e4 with three pieces. The other part of the plan requires White to play d4 and then either d5, or in some cases dxe5 if Black must recapture with the d-pawn. White will then have complete control of e4.

In the diagram position then, White plays 1 g4 ♗e6 2 d4 and d5 followed by ♘g3 with a huge advantage.

Black's ...f4 pawn sacrifice

White should always be on the lookout for the possibility of Black playing ...f4 in these lines.

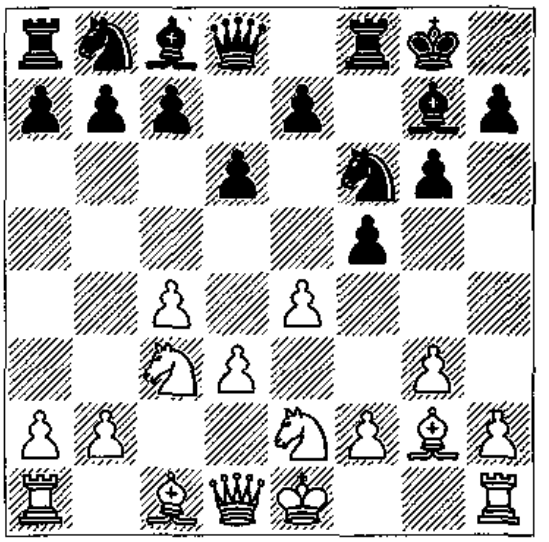


Kosten – Philippe
Cap d'Agde 1998

8...f4 9 gxf4 ♘h5 10 fxe5 dxe5

Black has good positional compensation for the pawn: open d-file pressing against the backward d3-pawn, open f-file, good squares for pieces on d4 and f4. Thus it pays White to capture on f5 first, as then, providing Black recaptures with the g-pawn, the ...f4 move is less dangerous, as it concedes the e4-square. Better still, follow exf5 gxf5 with f4, fixing the f5-pawn.

6...d6 7 ♘ge2 *(D)*



7...c6

This allows Black to recapture on f5 with his queen's bishop if he desires, and keeps open the option of playing the queen's knight to d7, or a6 and c7. Black's other possibilities:

a) 7...e5 8 exf5! (in this particular position, where Black has just castled, White should make this capture now, for not only is Black unable to recapture on f5 with his bishop, as b7 would be *en prise*, but 8 0-0 allows the dangerous pawn sacrifice 8...f4! 9 gxf4 ♘h5 – I am speaking from experience, as this happened to me once – see above, and, although I managed to win the game very quickly, this was down to my opponent's faulty follow-up) 8...gxf5 9 0-0 c6 10 d4 transposes back to the main line.

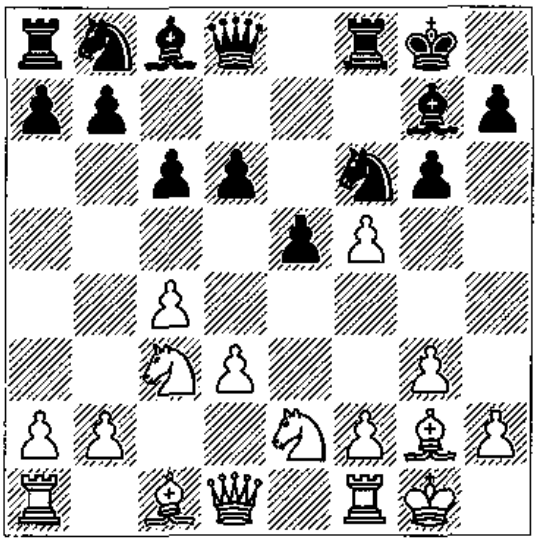
b) 7...♘c6 8 0-0 e5 and now 9 ♘d5 transposes to Chapter 1, Line B.

c) 7...fxe4!? 8 dxe4 c5 9 0-0 ♘c6 was played in Gelfand-Kindermann, Biel 1995, but rather than 10 f4 ♗e6 11 ♘d5 ♕d7 12 ♕d3 ♗h3 13 ♗d2 ♗xg2 14 ♔xg2, after which the game was soon drawn, White can try 10 h3, not worrying about 10...e5 and ...♘d4, as White can expand on the kingside, and ignore the d4-knight, continuing g4, ♘g3, f4 with a kingside initiative.

8 0-0 e5 9 exf5 *(D)*

Once again, there is little point allowing Black the option of playing ...f4.

B

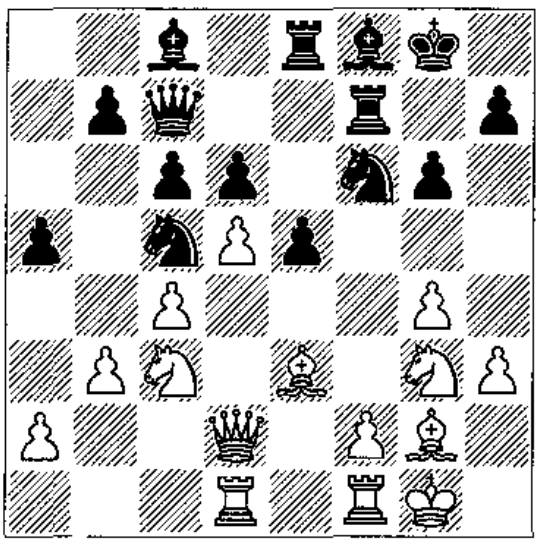


9...gxf5

This is probably the best recapture, as after 9...♗xf5 White has a simple, and very effective, plan, viz. 10 h3! (the immediate 10 d4 seems the same, but is less accurate as Black can cut across White's plan by 10...♕d7!, preventing h3, e.g. 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 b3 ♕e7, with active play, Markowski-Malaniuk, Minsk 1998) and now:

a) 10...♘bd7 11 d4 ♕c7 (if Black plays 11...♕a5 then 12 ♗e3 ♖ad8 13 d5 ♘b8 14 g4 ♗d7 15 ♘g3 ♕b4 16 ♕e2 a6 17 ♖fc1 ♔h8 18 a3 ♕a5 19 b4 drives him back, and White triumphs quickly, McNab-Parkin, Scottish Ch (Aviemore) 1997; probably Black should continue 11...h5 whatever its evident drawbacks, but few players actually see what is coming) 12 b3 ♖ae8 13 d5! (ostensibly threatening to win a piece with g4, but this move's real point is the occupation of d5; once Black is unable to play ...d5 himself, then White should be able to make the e4-square his own) 13...♘c5 14 ♗e3 a5 15 g4! ♗c8 16 ♕d2 ♖f7 17 ♖ad1 ♗f8 18 ♘g3 *(D)*.

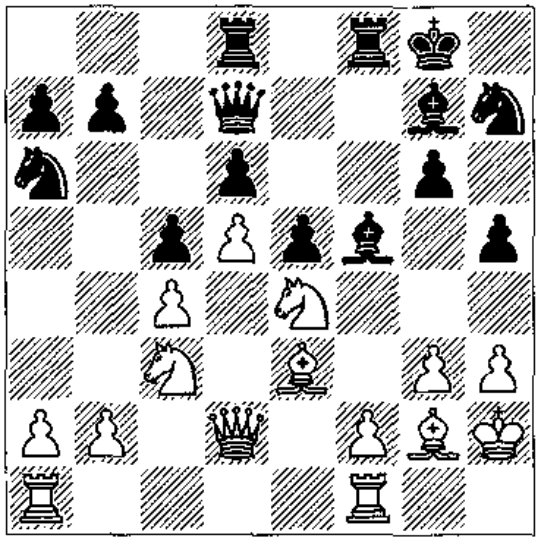
B



White has gained e4 just as outlined in the introduction to this section, and can increase the pressure as he pleases, Spraggett-Baragar, Canadian Ch (Hamilton) 1994.

b) 10...♘a6 11 d4 h5! (seeing that White intended to play as in the previous note, with d5 and g4, followed by

occupation of e4, Black decides to stop g4 in the most drastic of ways; however, g5 is weakened, so...) 12 ♗g5 ♕c8 13 ♔h2 ♕c7 14 ♕d2 ♘h7 15 ♗e3 ♖ad8 16 d5 c5 17 ♘e4 ♕d7 18 ♘2c3 *(D)*.



White enjoys a clear advantage in any case, with control of e4 and possibilities of breaking both on the queenside, with b4, and on the kingside, with f3 and g4, Kosten-Ochoa de Echagüen, Chanac 1995.

10 d4 ♘a6 11 b3

This is always a useful little move in these type of positions: the c-pawn is strengthened, and the queen's bishop can now be developed on b2 or a3.

11...♘c7

Alternatives:

a) 11...♗d7 seems odd, although it was played in Markowski-Topalov, Polanica Zdroj 1995. Rather than 12 dxe5?!, the move 12 ♗a3 causes Black no end of problems.

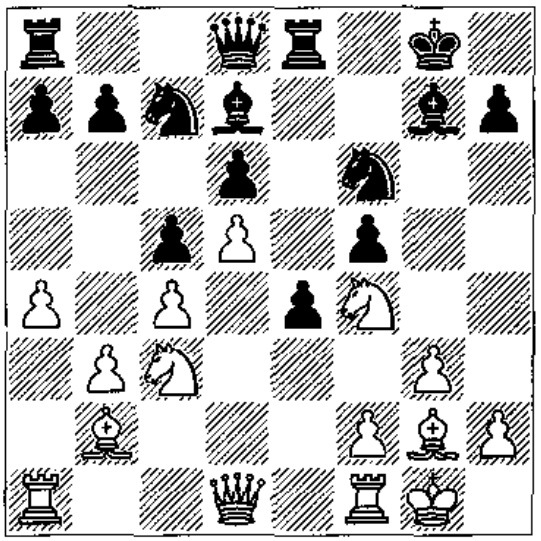
b) 11...♗e6 12 ♖b1 ♗f7 13 ♗g5 realizes the 'Petrosian pin', Spraggett-Ross, Canada 1994.

c) 11...e4 (this seems premature: Black intends ...d5, but e4 serves as a target for the white pieces) 12 ♗g5 d5 13 cxd5 cxd5 14 ♕d2 ♗e6 15 ♗h6 ♕d7 16 ♕g5 ♘g4?! 17 ♕xg7+ ♕xg7 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♘f4 ♘c7?! 20 ♘b5, and White wins the exchange, San Segundo-Romero, Spanish Cht 1994.

12 ♗a3 e4

This is a concession, conceding the f4-square. Black hopes to play ...d5, with a strong centre, but White puts paid to this idea.

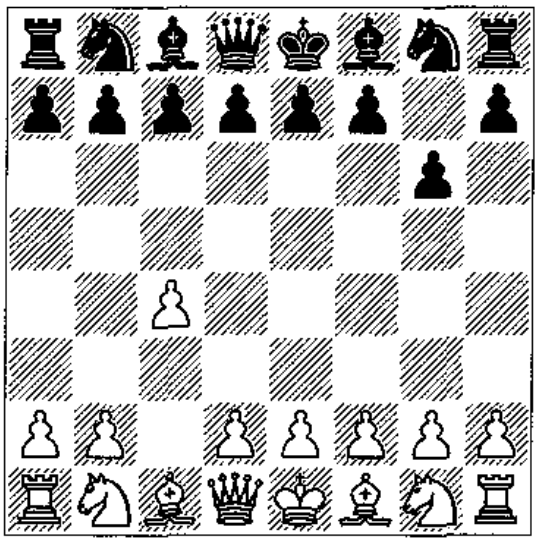
13 ♘f4 ♖e8 14 d5 c5 15 ♗b2 ♗d7 16 a4 *(D)*



White's position is very pleasant indeed, Kosten-Marcelin, Cannes Masters 1998. The squares e3 and f4 belong to White, and the coming f3 break will leave Black with even more weaknesses.

13 1...g6

1 c4 g6 *(D)*



This move has become very popular since Kasparov adopted it some years ago – it occurs about 11% of the time. Black is most likely a King's Indian player, and he is happy for White to play 2 d4, or 2 ♘c3 ♗g7 3 d4, with a probable transposition.

2 g3 ♗g7 3 ♗g2

There are now two important lines:

A: 3...e5 124
B: 3...♘f6 128

3...d6 is possible, when Black can play with ...c5 or ...e5 as he desires, and 3...c5 is also legitimate, of course, with transposition into Chapter 8.

A)

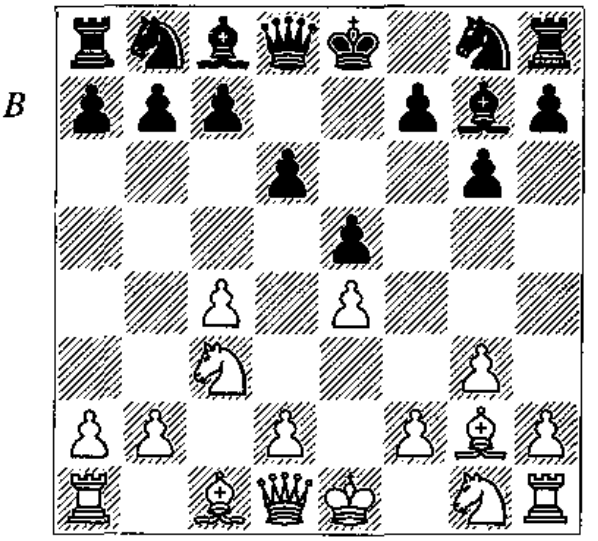
3...e5

If Black wants to play ...f5 before ...♘f6, or keep his intentions regarding the development of this knight a secret, then naturally, Black should play 3...e5 now, when 4 ♘c3 will transpose into the Botvinnik, Chapter 1, should Black play a subsequent ...♘c6, or into Chapter 12, Line B, if Black foregoes this move, and plays instead ...c6 at some point.

4 ♘c3 d6

Just out of interest, this is the move-order that the World Champion, Garry Kasparov, has used many times for Black. (This just might be the reason that it is popular, of course.) Often it will transpose into one of the lines we have already examined, but there are some independent lines. If, instead, 4...f5 then 5 d3 d6 6 e4 transposes.

5 e4 *(D)*

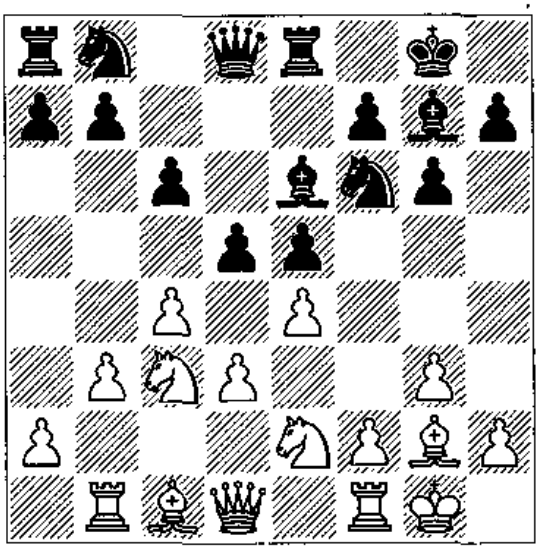


5...♘f6

This is quite unusual; by far the most popular move, 5...♘c6, transposes to Botvinnik's System after 6 ♘ge2 (Chapter 1), and 5...♘e7 6 ♘ge2 likewise, provided Black plays a later ...♘bc6, which he almost certainly will. If he places his knight on d7 instead, this will transpose into the discussion of 5...♘d7 below.

Black plays ...d5

Sometimes Black plays ...c6, and then ...d5. This is possible here, in those variations where Black has abstained from ...♘c6, but very unlikely in Chapter 1, for instance. How should White's react? Often he can obtain an advantage by first capturing on d5 with his e-pawn, and then playing ♗g5, pressurizing the d5-pawn.

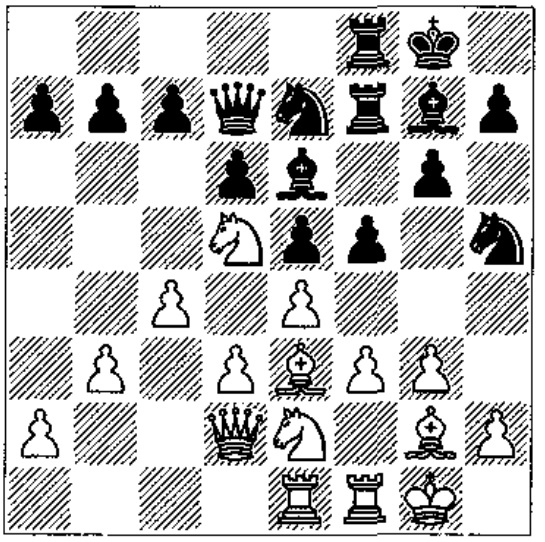


In the diagram position Black has just played ...d5. Obviously, capturing twice on d5 would suit Black fine, as White's d3-pawn would be backward. So, White plays 10 exd5! cxd5 11 ♗g5 and Black is in trouble: the d5-pawn is now *en prise* and both 11...dxc4 and 11...d4 open the h1-a8 diagonal, as well as allowing White the d5-square.

Black avoids normal lines completely

But just how should White react if Black decides to go his own way? One major distinguishing factor in flank openings is, as there is often an absence of direct contact in the opening stages, that both sides can develop their pieces much as they wish without suffering an immediate refutation. The problems incurred by misplacing the pieces often crop up later in the game. Here is a recent example of mine: 5...♘d7 (by steadfastly refusing to enter standard main lines, Black indicates that he wishes to play a Modern Defence or King's Indian, and by refusing to play ...♘c6 and control d4, allows White to play d4 himself) 6 ♘ge2 ♘e7 7 0-0 (how should White react in such situations? Of course, objectively his best move may be to play d4, and transpose into a favourable King's Indian, Fianchetto Variation, but Black has clearly indicated that he is happy with this outcome, so I prefer to stick to something I know better than my opponent) 7...0-0 8 d3 f5 9 ♗e3 (I decided to play exactly the same set-up as in Chapter 1, Botvinnik's System, adjusting the move-order to take into account any nuances in my opponent's move-order) 9...♘f6 10 f3 (this is directed against the threat

of ...♘g4, and also to guard against possibilities of ...f4) 10...♗e6 11 b3 (the c4-pawn needed to be defended, as ...fxe4 was threatened) 11...♕d7 12 ♕d2 ♖f7 13 ♘d5! (of course, this is the right moment for this thematic move, as ...♘(either)xd5 is now impossible, as cxd5 would win the e6-bishop, since its only retreat-square has just been occupied by the rook) 13...♘h5 14 ♖ae1 (the rook had to be removed from the a1-h8 diagonal as ...f4 could have been strong otherwise) 14...♖af8 *(D)*.



White has managed to achieve exactly the same piece placement as in Chapter 1, and must now decide on his next course of action. 15 ♘xe7+ (although capturing this piece seems odd, as the d5-knight was clearly more active than the e7 one, it is part of a clear plan of action: White has decided to force a weakening of the black pawn-structure by capturing on f5, but the immediate capture would have been met by ...♘xf5, keeping the f-file open) 15...♕xe7 16 exf5 gxf5 (obviously forced, as 16...♗xf5? loses a piece to 17 g4) 17 f4 (fixing the f5-pawn, which in turn blocks the f-file and renders the doubling of the black rooks on this file somewhat redundant) 17...b6 18 d4 (White forces another favourable alteration in the pawn-structure) 18...e4 19 d5 ♗d7 20 ♗d4, and White has a clear edge with play against the weak f-pawn, good squares for the knight on either d4 or e3, and the possibility of a breakthrough on the queenside, Kosten-Weill, French League 1999.

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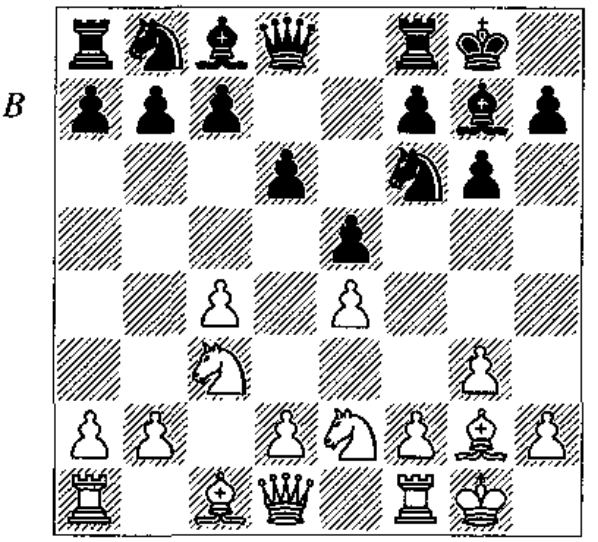
6 ♘ge2 0-0 7 0-0 *(D)*



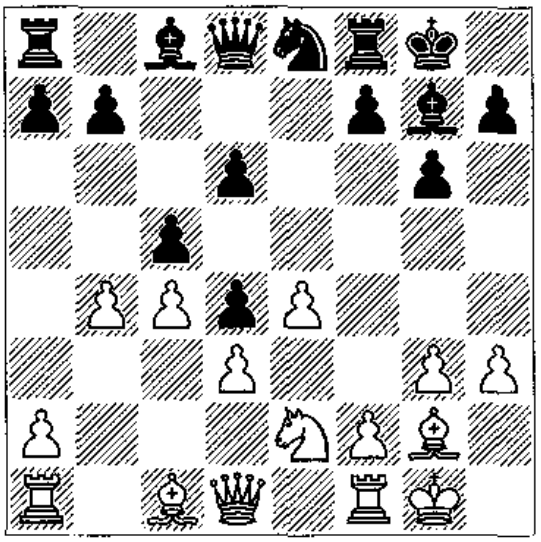
7...c6

Not for the first time, 7...♘c6 8 f4 bring us to Line F of Chapter 1.

a) Incidentally, if Black ever tries to 'copy' White, by playing 7...c5 at some stage, then White often gains the advantage by playing a quick f4, before Black can reply with ...f5: 8 d3 ♘c6 9 h3 ♘d4!? (9...a6 10 f4 exf4,

Narciso-Herraiz, Spanish Ch 1997, 11 gxf4 is promising for White, as is 9...♗e6 10 f4) 10 ♘xd4 and now:

a1) 10...exd4?! 11 ♘e2 ♘e8 12 b4! *(D)*.


B

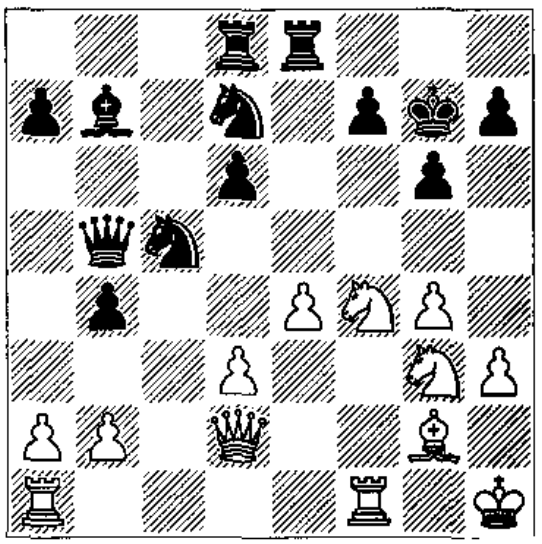
Petrosian's plan. If White can capture on c5, and Black has to recapture with his d-pawn, then the white kingside pawns will be free to roll forward by f4, g4, e5, etc. 12...cxb4 13 a3 bxa3 14 ♖xa3 ♘c7 15 ♗b2 ♘e6 16 ♕a1 a6?! 17 ♘xd4 and White has regained the sacrificed pawn, whilst still maintaining his superior structure and queenside pressure, Skembris-Vukić, Krusevac (2) 1994.

a2) 10...cxd4!? is better, when 11 ♘a4!?, with the plan of b4 and f4, is stronger than 11 ♘e2 ♗e6?! (11...♘d7! is better, answering 12 f4 with 12...f5) 12 a3 ♕d7 13 ♔h2 b5 14 b3 bxc4 15 bxc4 ♖ab8 16 f4 ♘e8 17 g4 f5, and now, in Leito-Vetemaa, Tallinn 1998, White took control of the light squares by 18 exf5! gxf5 19 gxf5 ♖xf5 20 ♘g3 ♖f8 21 f5! ♗xf5?? (21...♗f7 is forced) 22 ♘xf5 ♖xf5 23 ♕g4 ♖xf1 (23...♖f7 24 ♗d5) 24 ♕xd7 winning.

b) 7...♘bd7 8 f4! (this should be compared with Line F, Chapter 1) and now:

b1) 8...♘c5 9 d3 a5 10 f5 (first 10 h3 and then g4, is also a good idea, as in line 'b2') 10...c6 11 h3 d5 12 fxg6 hxg6 13 exd5 cxd5 and now after 14 ♗g5!? d4 15 ♘d5 ♖a6 16 g4 ♖e6 17 ♘g3 ♕d6, Black held the balance in Sliwa-Uhlmann, Zinnowitz 1967, but 14 cxd5! just wins a pawn.

b2) 8...c6 9 h3 b5 (Black hopes to distract White from his planned kingside pawn-storm) 10 d3 ♕b6+ 11 ♔h1 ♗b7 12 g4 exf4 13 ♗xf4 ♖fe8 (Black should prefer 13...bxc4, e.g. 14 dxc4 ♖fe8, with some pressure on e4) 14 cxb5 cxb5 15 ♘g3 ♘c5 16 ♗e3 b4 17 ♘ce2 ♕b5 18 ♗d4 ♘fd7 19 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♘f4 (having exchanged Black's valuable defensive bishop, and weakened the dark squares around his king, White brings his pieces over for the kill) 20...♖ad8 21 ♕d2 *(D)*.


B

21...♘e6 22 d4 a5 23 ♘fh5+ ♔g8 24 d5 ♘g7 25 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 26 ♕g5 ♔g8 27 ♘h5 ♕b6 28 ♕h6 gxh5 29 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 30 ♕xh7+ 1-0 Seirawan-Sigurjonsson, Wijk aan Zee 1980.

8 d3

Naturally, White can play 8 d4, when transposition into a main line King's Indian, Fianchetto Variation, is likely.

8...♘a6

8...♘bd7 will transpose into note 'b' to Black's 7th move.

9 h3 ♘c7

If, instead 9...♗e6, then 10 f4 ♕d7 and now, instead of 11 ♔h2 ♖ac8 12 a4?! (12 g4) 12...♘b4 13 ♗e3 a5 14 ♕d2 exf4 15 ♘xf4 ♕e7 16 ♖f2 ♘d7 17 ♖af1 ♘e5 with chances for both sides, A.Martin-Speelman, British Ch (Swansea) 1987, 11 g4 exf4 12 ♘xf4 with an edge.

10 f4

As Black is unable to respond to this move with ...f5, he must find a way to stop White's automatic attack by f5, g4-g5, etc. 10 d4 is also a good choice, with a slightly superior King's Indian position, e.g. 10...exd4 11 ♘xd4 ♘e6 12 ♗e3 ♘xd4 13 ♗xd4 ♗e6 14 ♕d3 ♕a5 15 ♘e2 ♖ad8 16 ♘f4 ♗c8 17 ♗c3 ♕a6 18 ♖fd1, with a typical plus, Chernin-Gallagher, San Bernardino 1994, but, in general, I prefer to stick with what I know.

10...b5

Trying to upset White's plans by staging a counter-demonstration on the queenside. If 10...exf4 then I would prefer 11 gxf4, threatening to push Black off the board by d4 and e5, rather than the 11 ♗xf4 ♘e6 12 ♗e3 ♘d7 13 ♕d2 ♘e5 14 b3 c5 15 d4 cxd4 16 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 17 ♗xd4 ♗e6 18 ♖ad1 of Wirthensohn-Gallagher, Lucerne 1994.

11 cxb5 cxb5 12 a3 ♗b7 13 ♗e3

Prudent, but 13 f5, and if 13...d5, then 14 g4 or 14 ♗g5 is tempting.

13...♕e7 14 ♖c1 ♖fb8 15 ♕e1 ♘d7 16 b4 a6 17 ♕f2

White has a plus, Paneque-Zapata, Bayamo 1990.

B)

3...♘f6

With this move, Black defers a decision on his central pawn-formation. He is still angling for a transposition into a King's Indian, but this time the Fianchetto Variation, 4 d4 0-0 5 ♘f3 d6, etc. If you like playing this for White, then go ahead, but White can also adopt a purely 'English' approach, and will aim for a line where Black's third move is not critical. Lines with a quick ...f5 are no longer possible, for instance.

4 ♘c3 0-0

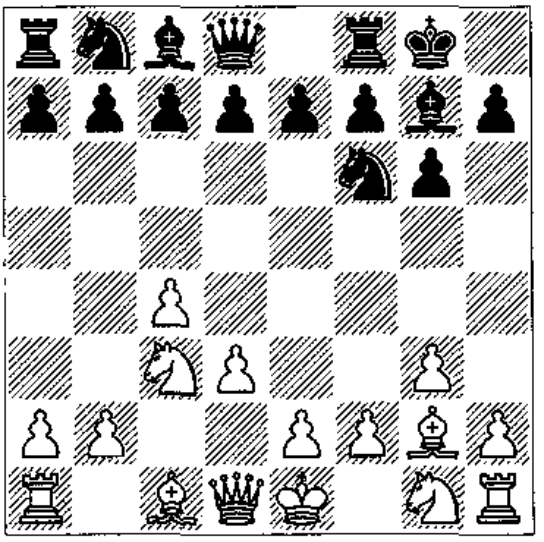
4...d6 will certainly transpose.

5 d3 *(D)*

Once more, 5 d4 is good (or first ♘f3, then d4), if you know your KI theory, but 5 e4, hoping for Line F of Chapter 1 (after 5...d6 6 ♘ge2 e5), will allow Black the possibility 5...c5, or 6...c5, keeping the a1-h8 diagonal clear for the g7-bishop. The rule is: if

Black plays an early ...e5, then White can play e4; if not, then it is better to play something else.

B



5...d6

The obvious 5...e5 6 e4 d6 7 ♘ge2 could be played, of course, when 7...♘c6 8 0-0 transposes to Chapter 1, Line F.

If 5...c5 then White can try to transpose into Chapter 8 by 6 a3 ♘c6 7 ♖b1 a5 8 ♘h3, etc., but it is also possible to follow Gurevich's recipe: 6 ♗g5 ♘c6 (if 6...h6 then the bishop could retreat, but 7 ♗xf6!? ♗xf6 8 ♕d2 ♗g7 9 h4 is also interesting) 7 ♕d2, and now:

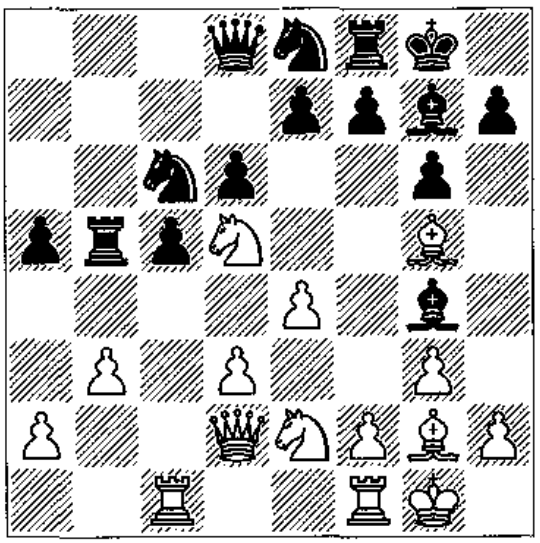
a) 7...♘d4 (this is a typical idea for Black: he wishes to dissuade White from playing ♗h6, because of the fork ...♘c2+, but this justifies White's play, as he will be able to gain time chasing this piece away) 8 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 (8...exf6 9 e3 would present White with lifetime control of the d5-square) 9 ♘e4 ♕b6 (9...♗g7?! 10 ♘xc5 ♕b6 11 ♘a4 ♕a6 12 ♕d1 loses a pawn) 10 e3 ♘f5 11 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 12 ♘e2 ♖b8 13 ♘c3 b6 14 h4! e6 (14...h5 15 ♘d5 ♕d6 16 ♗e4 ♘g7 17 d4 keeps an edge) 15 h5 ♘d6 16 f4!? ♕g7 17 e4 f5 18 e5 ♘f7 19 hxg6 hxg6 20 0-0-0 d6 21 exd6 ♘xd6 22 ♕e3 ♗d7 23 d4 ♘xc4 24 ♕d3 b5 25 dxc5 ♖bd8 26 ♕d4! exchanging into an ending that is winning due to the passed c-pawn and Black's bad bishop, M.Gurevich-Chabanon, Cap d'Agde 1994.

b) 7...d6 and now:

b1) 8 ♗h6 is certainly possible.

b2) 8 e4!? ♗d7 9 ♘ge2 a6 10 0-0 ♖b8 11 ♖ae1 b5 12 b3 ♘e8 13 ♘d5?! a5?! (13...♘c7 14 f4 ♘e6 15 ♗h4 ♘ed4 is equal) 14 cxb5 ♖xb5 15 ♖c1 ♗g4 *(D)*.

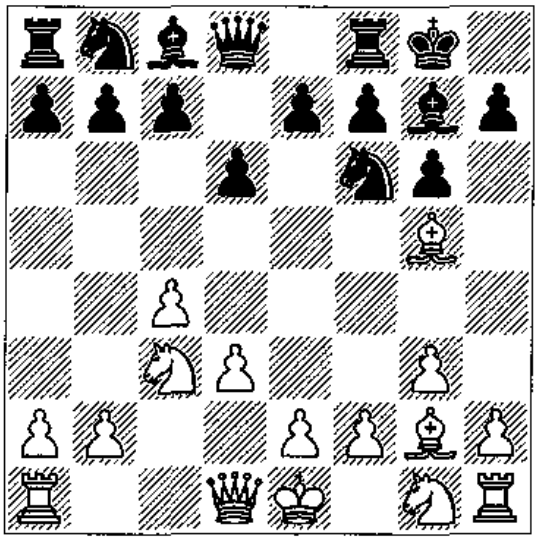
W



16 e5! dxe5 17 a4 ♖b7? (17...♖xb3 18 ♖xc5 e4 19 dxe4 ♖b2 20 ♖c2 ♖xc2 21 ♕xc2 ♘b4! 22 ♕d2 ♘xd5 is equal) 18 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7 (18...♘xe7 19 ♗xb7) 19 ♗xc6 ♘f6 20 ♖xc5 e4 21 ♘f4! ♕d6 22 ♖fc1 ♖c7 23 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 24 ♘d5 ♗d4 25 ♖xa5 ♖fc8 26 ♘xc7 ♖xc7 27 ♖d5 winning, Chabanon-Kr.Georgiev, Clermont-Ferrand 1995.

b3) 8 ♖b1 (White decides to play on both sides of the board) 8...♖b8 9 a3 ♘d4 10 b4 ♗d7! 11 ♘f3 ♗c6 12 e4 ♘g4 13 h3 ♘xf3+ 14 ♗xf3 ♘e5 15 ♗g2 b5 16 cxb5 ♗xb5 17 ♘xb5 ♖xb5 18 0-0 cxb4 19 ♖xb4 ♖xb4 20 ♕xb4! ♘xd3 21 ♕b7 (another point behind White's sixth move – the masked attack on the e7-pawn) 21...♕b6 22 ♕xb6 axb6 23 ♗xe7, and White's bishop-pair and better pawn-structure proved sufficient advantage to net the full point in M.Gurevich-Kirov, Cap d'Agde 1994.

6 ♗g5 *(D)*



Mikhail Gurevich has been experimenting with this move recently, with some success. The obvious first idea is to follow up with ♕d2 and ♗h6, exchanging Black's strong g7-bishop, and then continue h4-h5 with an attack. The more subtle second idea is to refrain from committing the central pawns until it is clear how Black will react.

6...h6

Black forces the bishop away, but creates a potential weakness on the black kingside. Alternatives:

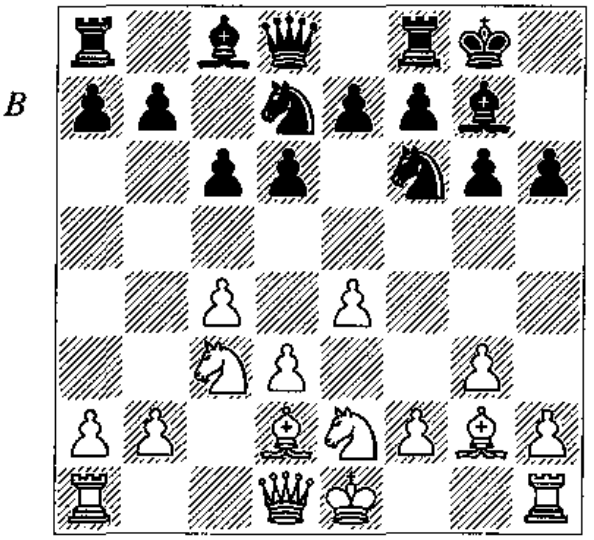
a) 6...c6 7 ♕d2 ♘bd7 should probably also be met by 8 e4, as in the main line, when Black will have little choice but to play ...e5 at some point, rather than 8 ♗h6 e5 9 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 10 e3 ♖e8 11 ♘ge2, Chernin-Ki.Georgiev, Saint John 1988.

b) 6...♘c6 7 ♕d2 ♘d4 and now 8 ♘f3 ♘xf3+ 9 ♗xf3, Capece-Bonugli, Corsico 1997, is not very exciting, but 8 h4!? is certainly playable, e.g. 8...h6 9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 h5 g5 11 e3 and 0-0-0.

7 ♗d2 c6

7...e5 can be met by 8 e4 and ♘ge2, etc., with a 'Botvinnik-style' position.

8 e4 ♘bd7 9 ♘ge2 *(D)*



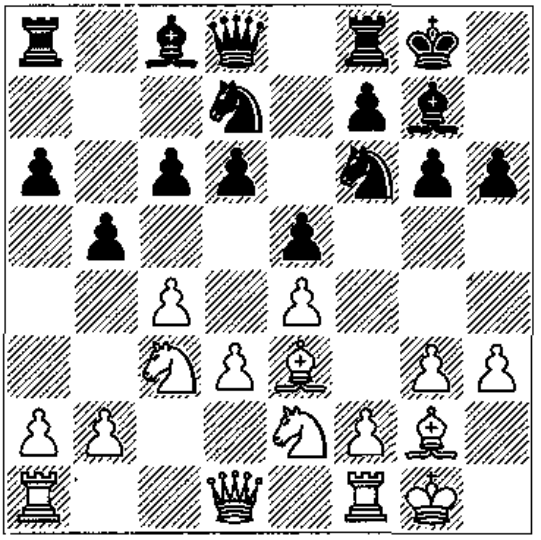
9...e5

Reaching a position similar to that in Line A. 9...♘e5 10 ♗c1 ♗g4 would be countered by the thematic line 11 h3 ♗f3 12 0-0 intending 13 ♗xf3 ♘xf3+ 14 ♔g2, swapping off White's lesser

bishop, and then driving the black pieces away.

10 h3 a6 11 0-0 b5 12 ♗e3 *(D)*

B



12...♖b8

Eyeing the b2-pawn. 12...b4?! is a fault, closing the position, and after 13 ♘a4 c5 14 ♕d2 ♔h7, White has a free hand developing his kingside initiative: 15 f4.

13 cxb5!? axb5 14 b4 ♗b7 15 a4

White decides to play on the queenside, but the alternative 15 ♕d2!? is also good.

15...bxa4 16 ♖xa4 d5?!

This weakens c5. It is better to open the b7-bishop's diagonal by 16...c5!.

17 ♗a7!? ♖a8 18 ♖a5!

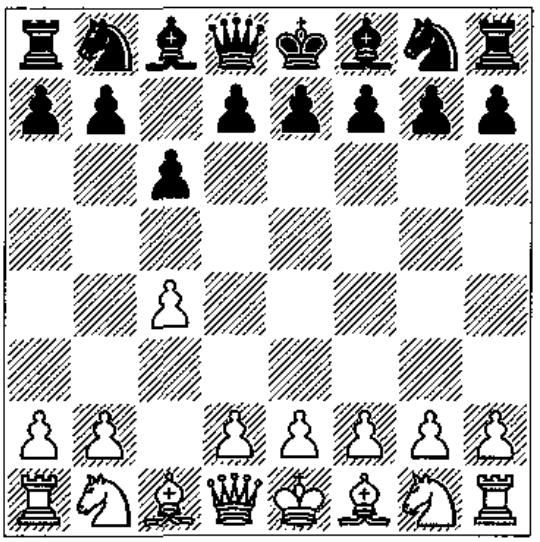
Making room for the manoeuvre ♘a4-c5.

18...d4?! 19 ♘a4 ♘e8 20 ♕d2 ♘d6 21 ♘c5 ♘xc5 22 ♗xc5 ♖e8 23 f4 ♘b5 24 ♕a2

White benefits from his pressure on both wings, M.Gurevich-Nijboer, Netherlands 1996.

14 1...c6

1 c4 c6 *(D)*



Black makes his intentions known immediately: he is a fan of the Slav Defence (which, at the time of writing, is phenomenally popular), and rather than learning a separate defence against the English Opening, he will try to play the Slav anyway. This occurs in about 6% of all English Openings – more often in recent years.

2 g3

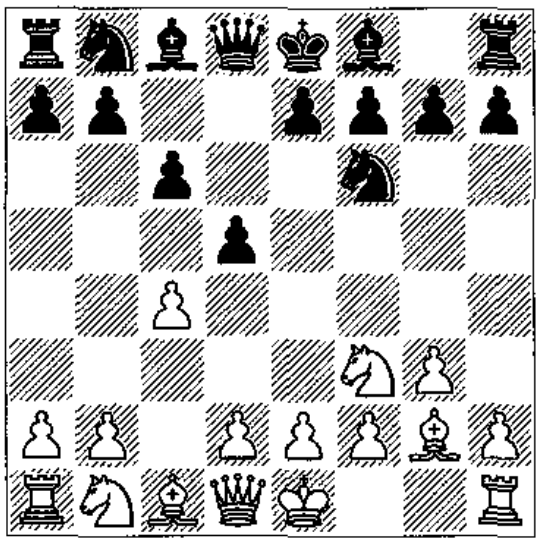
If you know a good line against the Slav, then now is the time to play 2 d4 d5, or 2 ♘c3 d5 3 d4, with a direct transposition. As an 'ex-e4-player' myself, I often play 2 e4 here, when after 2...d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 d4 (or 4 cxd5) we have a Panov Attack against the Caro-Kann. Note that this can be particularly effective against 'Slav' players who do not play the Caro-Kann against 1 e4! The text-move leads to positions of a different ilk altogether, more in the style of the English Opening, although once White plays ♘f3 it is classified as a Réti. White might just as well know these anyway, for if Black plays 1...♘f6, then after my recommended 2 g3, if Black replies 2...c6 then White can play neither the Slav nor the Panov.

2...d5 3 ♗g2 ♘f6

White's deferring the move ♘f3 does have some benefits. For instance, the move 3...♗g4?, which is fine after 3 ♘f3, is rather silly now, as 4 cxd5 cxd5 5 ♘c3 wins a pawn – the obvious 5...e6?? drops a piece to 6 ♕a4+. 3...e6 transposes to Chapter 15 (1...e6), but Black sometimes captures the c4-pawn in such positions, though it is certainly better when White has played ♘f3 before ♗g2, as now, after 3...dxc4 4 ♘a3, Black cannot really hold on to this pawn for long, although he can hope to force White to waste time trying to recapture it, e.g. 4...♗e6 (4...g6 5 ♘xc4 ♗g7 6 ♘f3 is too easy for White, Nalesny-Alavkin, Novgorod 1997; 4...b5? would allow 5 ♘xb5, of course) 5 ♕c2 ♘a6 6 ♘xc4 ♘b4 (6...g6 7 ♘f3 ♗g7 8 0-0 ♘h6, is more sensible, completing development, but,

in the long term, White's centre will give him the edge, Kunsztowicz-Farago, Hamburg 1995) 7 ♕b3 ♗d5 8 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 9 ♘f3 e5 10 a3 b5 11 axb4 bxc4, and, rather than 12 ♕c3 f6 13 ♖a5 ♕e4 14 0-0, Kimelfeld-Kuindzhi, USSR 1971, 12 ♕e3, forking e5 and a7, is critical.

4 ♘f3 *(D)*



Now there are four main possibilities:

A: 4...♗g4 133
B: 4...♗f5 134
C: 4...dxc4 135
D: 4...g6 136

Line A is Capablanca's line against the Réti, while B is Lasker's.

A)

4...♗g4 5 ♘e5

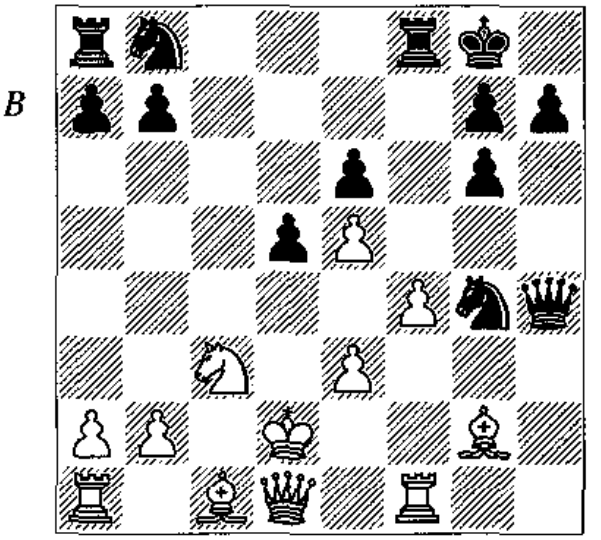
This is a very dangerous line for Black, by which White attempts to exploit the exposed position of the g4-bishop.

5...♗h5

The other retreat, 5...♗f5, amounts to very much the same: 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 ♘c3 e6?! (7...♘bd7 8 d4 e6 is sounder) 8 g4! ♗g6 9 h4! with two possibilities:

a) 9...h6?! 10 ♘xg6 (this fatally weakens the black pawn-structure and light squares, but 10 ♕a4+ ♘fd7 11 h5 ♗h7 12 ♘xd5 exd5 13 ♗xd5 ♕c7 14 ♘xf7 ♖g8 15 g5, Gutman-Pira, Cannes 1988, is also very convincing) 10...fxg6 11 ♕c2 ♔f7 12 h5.

b) 9...♗d6 10 d4! 0-0 (10...♗xe5?! is answered by 11 dxe5, with the point 11...♘xg4? 12 ♕a4+) 11 h5 ♗xe5 12 dxe5 ♘xg4 13 hxg6 fxg6 14 f4! ♕b6 15 ♖f1 ♕d8 16 e3! ♕h4+ 17 ♔d2 *(D)*.



White soon beat off the attack and put his extra piece to good use in Seul-Bangiev, Bundesliga 1992/3.

6 cxd5 cxd5

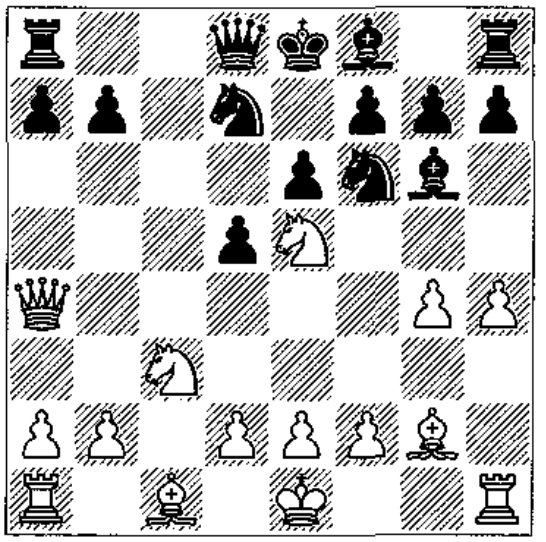
6...♘xd5 is sounder: 7 d4 ♘d7 8 ♘d3! ♕b6!? 9 ♘c3! e6 (9...♕xd4? loses to 10 ♘xd5 cxd5 11 ♗e3 ♕c4 12 ♘f4) 10 ♕a4 ♗g6 11 e4 ♘b4, Hodgson-Tukmakov, Winnipeg 1994, and now 12 ♘xb4 maintains a plus.

7 ♘c3 ♘bd7

7...e6 8 ♕a4+ transposes.

8 ♕a4 e6 9 g4! ♗g6 10 h4 *(D)*

B



Threatening to trap the hapless bishop.

10...♗d6

This is better than both 10...♗c2? 11 ♘xf7 ♗xa4 12 ♘xd8 ♔xd8 13 ♘xa4 ♘xg4 14 ♗h3 ♘df6 15 d4 ♖c8 16 ♘c5 ♗xc5 17 dxc5 ♘e5 18 ♖g1 g6 19 ♗f4 ♘ed7 20 ♗xe6, when the two powerful white bishops constitute a winning advantage for White, Romanishin-Suba, Moscow 1986, and 10...h6 11 ♘xg6 fxg6 12 ♕c2 ♔f7 13 h5, when the entry of the white queen on g6 will be very painful for Black.

11 d4 h6 12 ♘xg6!

An obvious improvement on 12 h5?, Kaidanov-Hübner, Groningen PCA qual 1993.

12...fxg6 13 g5

Now 13 ♕c2 ♔f7 14 h5 can be answered by 14...♘f8.

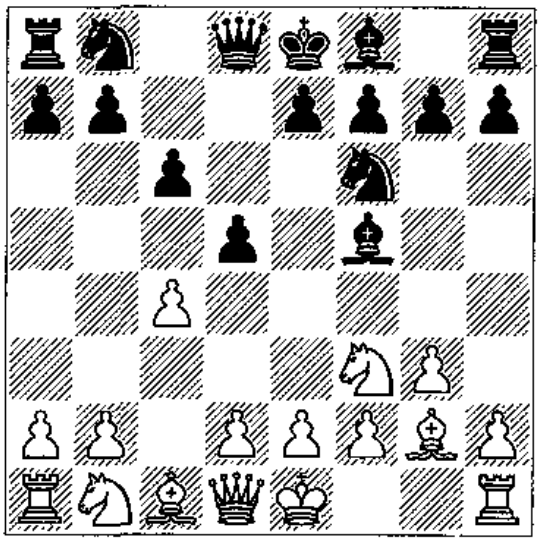
13...hxg5 14 hxg5 ♖xh1+ 15 ♗xh1 ♘h5 16 ♕c2

White has a huge advantage. The black pawns are very exposed on the same colour squares as White's h1-bishop.

B)

4...♗f5 *(D)*

W



The positionally correct idea behind both this and the previous line is to bring out the queen's bishop, and then set the central pawns on light squares. The problem is that White may be able to gain time on the bishop, and that b7 is undefended.

5 cxd5 cxd5 6 ♕b3 ♕b6

Or 6...♕c8 (other squares allow White to gain a tempo, e.g. 6...♕c7 7 ♘c3 e6 8 d3 ♘bd7 9 ♗f4) 7 ♘c3 e6 8 d3 ♘c6 9 ♗f4 ♗e7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♖ac1 ♗g6 (11...♕d7 12 e4!) 12 ♘e5 ♘d7 13 ♘xg6 hxg6 14 h4 with the bishop-pair, Korchnoi-Karpov, Moscow Ct (15) 1974.

7 ♕xb6

White is happy to play an endgame where b6 and b7 are doubled and weak,

and b5 provides a useful square for a knight.

7...axb6 8 ♘c3 ♘c6 9 d3 e6

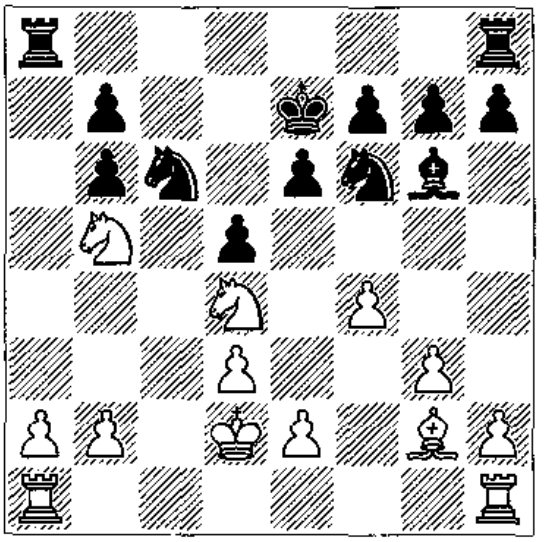
Others:

a) 9...e5 10 0-0 ♗e7 11 ♗g5 ♗e6 12 ♘d2 d4 13 ♘b5 ♔d7 14 ♘c4 with strong pressure, Kirov-Přibyl, Moscow Echt 1977.

b) 9...♗d7 10 ♗e3 ♖a6 11 0-0 e6 12 ♘b5 ♔d8 13 a3 ♘g4 14 ♗d2 ♘ge5 15 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 16 ♘c3 ♗d6 17 h3 ♔e7 18 f4 ♘c6 19 e4 favours White, Ma.Tseitlin-Vorotnikov, USSR 1972.

10 ♘b5! ♗b4+ 11 ♗d2 ♔e7 12 ♘fd4 ♗xd2+ 13 ♔xd2 ♗g6 14 f4 *(D)*

B



14...h6 15 a3 ♖hc8 16 ♖ac1 ♗h7 17 ♗h3 ♘d7 18 ♖c3 ♘xd4 19 ♘xd4

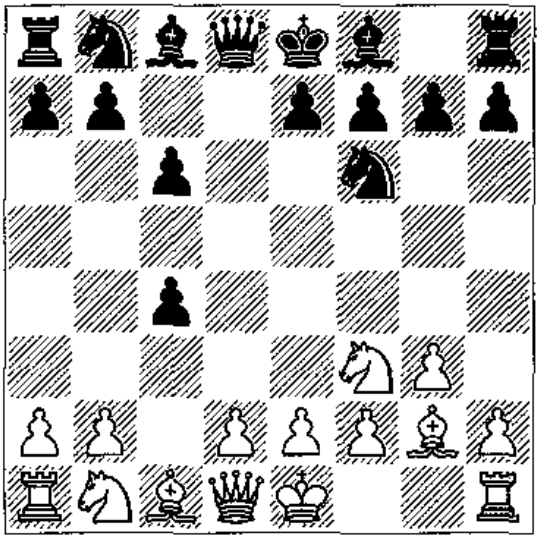
White's better structure and more active minor pieces proved sufficient to win in Portisch-Smyslov, Wijk aan Zee 1972.

C)

4...dxc4 *(D)*

This is possible now, as, by playing ♘f3 and closing the h1-a8 diagonal,

W



White has allowed Black the opportunity of holding on to the c4-pawn by ...b5.

5 ♕c2 b5

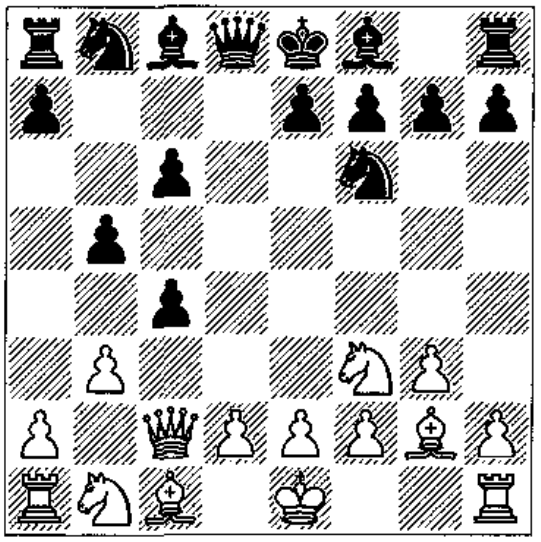
Black takes up the challenge, but there are alternatives:

a) 5...♕d5 6 ♘c3 ♕f5 (better is 6...♕h5 7 ♘d1 e5 8 ♘e3 e4 9 ♘h4 ♗e6 10 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 11 ♕xe4, which is unclear, *Ma.Tseitlin-Pinter, Beersheba* 1991) 7 e4 ♕h5 8 ♘e2 e5 9 h3 ♘a6 10 g4 ♘xg4 11 ♘g3 ♕g6 12 hxg4 ♘b4 13 ♕xc4 ♗e6 14 ♕c3 ♘xa2 15 ♘xe5 ♕f6 16 ♖xa2 ♗xa2 17 d4 is crushing for White, Vaulin-Solozhenkin, Russian Ch 1994.

b) 5...♘bd7 6 ♘a3 b5 7 b3 ♗b7 8 bxc4 b4 9 ♘b1 c5 10 ♗b2 e5 11 0-0 ♗d6 12 d3 0-0 13 ♘bd2 ♖e8 14 ♘h4 ♗xg2 15 ♘xg2 ♗f8 16 e4 g6 17 ♘e3 ♗h6 18 ♘d5 with a clear edge for White, Vadasz-Lukacs, Hungary 1979.

c) 5...♗e6 is met by the standard line 6 ♘g5 ♗d5 7 e4 h6 8 ♘h3 ♗e6 9 ♘f4 ♗c8 10 ♕xc4 with an advantage, Hug-Lev, Bern Z 1990.

6 b3 *(D)*



Sooner or later, White will have to play this move, which makes his pawn sacrifice permanent. What compensation will he have for the pawn? It is entirely positional: two open files for his rooks to attack Black's somewhat rickety queenside, a strong presence in the centre, and good squares for his pieces.

6...cxb3 7 axb3 ♗b7 8 ♗a3 a6 9 0-0 g6 10 d4 ♗g7 11 ♘bd2 0-0 12 e4 a5 13 e5 ♘d5 14 ♘e4

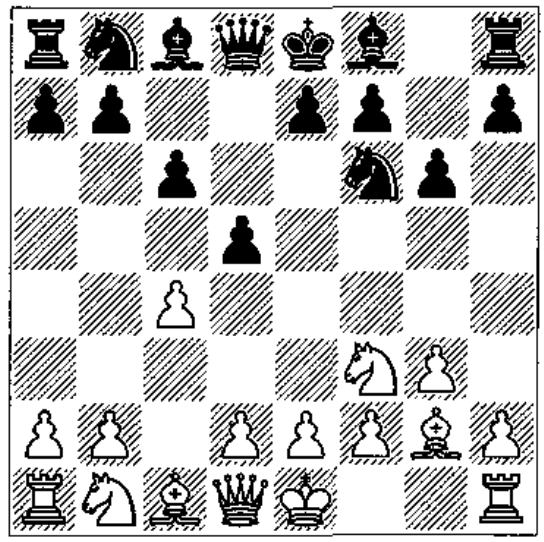
Reaching a typical position; if the c6-pawn can be considered to be Black's additional pawn, then it is clear that it is as much a liability as an advantage, Dzindzichashvili-Bagirov, USSR Ch 1972.

D)

4...g6 *(D)*

5 b3

The simplest plan, neutralizing the g7-bishop's pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal.



5...♗g7 6 ♗b2 0-0 7 0-0 ♗g4

This is the most active move, as although Black may have to exchange this piece for White's knight, he will maintain a solid position, and he will not suffer from a bad bishop. If 7...♘bd7, then 8 d3 ♖e8 9 ♘bd2 e5 10 cxd5 ♘xd5 11 e4!? ♘5b6 12 a4 ♘c5 13 a5!, when play has gone into a favourable reversed Sicilian position for White, Nalbandian-Papaioannou, Gent 1993.

8 d3 ♘bd7 9 ♘bd2 ♖e8 10 h3 ♗xf3 11 ♘xf3 e5 12 cxd5 ♘xd5

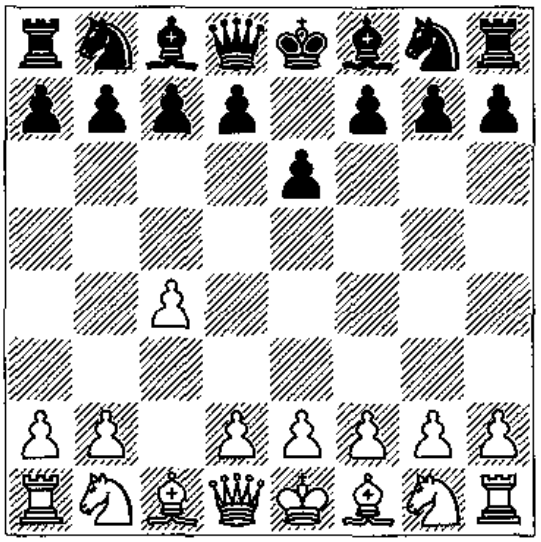
Black is heading for a Sicilian structure, rather than play 12...cxd5 13 ♖c1 e4 14 dxe4 dxe4 15 ♘d4 ♕b6 16 ♘c2 ♖ad8 17 ♘e3, which is better for White, Glek-Van Mil, Wijk aan Zee 1995.

13 ♕c2 ♕e7 14 ♘d2 a5 15 a3 h5 16 e3 f5?! 17 e4!

Breaking up Black's fragile kingside formation, Stohl-Glek, Bundesliga 1993/4.

15 1...e6

1 c4 e6 *(D)*



Another 'universal' black reply, and one that occurs in about 15% of English Opening games. One of the attractions for Black of the Queen's Gambit Declined (1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6), certain variations of the Slav Defence (1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6) and the Dutch (1 d4 f5 2 c4 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 e6), is that they can be played, not only against 1 d4, but also against all the Flank Openings (1 c4 and 1 ♘f3, in particular). This constitutes a problem for the erstwhile English Opening player who does not desire to learn how to play 1 d4.

2 g3

This move is important for our purposes, as after 1 c4 ♘f6 2 g3 Black can play 2...e6, transposing. 2 ♘c3 d5 3 d4, 2 d4 d5 and 2 ♘f3 d5 3 d4 all lead to various Queen's Gambits. 2 ♘c3 d5 3 d4 c6 results in a Slav, whilst, if White plays a quick g3 (2 ♘c3 d5 3 d4 ♘f6 4 g3) there is a Catalan Opening. This is more in the spirit of the English Opening, of course, as White relies heavily on the g2-bishop's authority along the h1-a8 diagonal.

2...d5 3 ♗g2 ♘f6

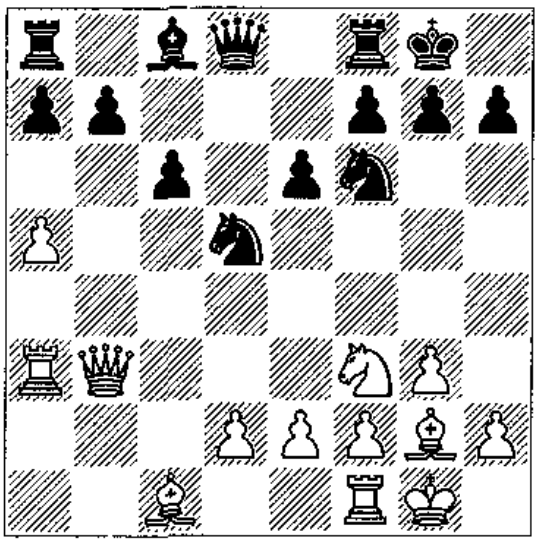
This is the most logical, but there are three entirely different options for Black to consider:

a) 3...dxc4 4 ♘f3 will transpose to the note (4...dxc4) to Black's 4th move after 4...♘f6 but 4...♘d7 is also a possibility, attempting to hang on to the pawn (by ...♘b6), without creating weaknesses in the pawn-structure (after ...b5). 5 ♘a3!? (5 ♕a4 is the standard move, regaining the pawn by force, but losing time with the queen) 5...♗xa3 (better than the 5...♘b6?! of Sunye-Passerotti, Lucerne OL 1982, when 6 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 7 ♕a4+ and ♕xc4 would have been simplest) 6 bxa3 ♘gf6 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♕c2 ♘b6 9 ♘e5 ♖b8!? (9...♕e8?! 10 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 11 ♕xc4 ♕e7 12 d4 c6 13 ♗b2 ♗d7 14 ♕b3 ♖fd8 15 ♖ac1 ♗e8 16 ♖fd1 ♖ac8 17 a4 ♕c7 18 e4 allows White a powerful centre to go with his bishops, Schmidt-Radulov, Vrbas 1976) 10 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 11 ♕xc4 b6 12 d3 ♗b7

13 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 14 a4 ♕d5 15 ♕a6 ♖bb8 16 ♗b2 ♘d7 17 ♖fc1 c5 18 ♕c4 ♕xc4 19 ♖xc4 e5 20 f4 with an edge, as a later a5 will relieve White of his doubled pawns, Pigusov-Vilela, Santa Clara 1991.

b) 3...c6 4 ♘f3 dxc4 5 0-0 ♘f6?! (hanging onto the pawn by 5...b5 6 a4 ♗b7 meets the classic response 7 b3 cxb3 8 ♕xb3, when White will have a strong centre and lots of queenside pressure in return for the pawn) 6 a4 ♘a6 7 ♘a3 ♗xa3 8 ♖xa3 ♘b4 9 a5! 0-0 10 b3! cxb3 11 ♕xb3 ♘bd5 *(D)*.

W

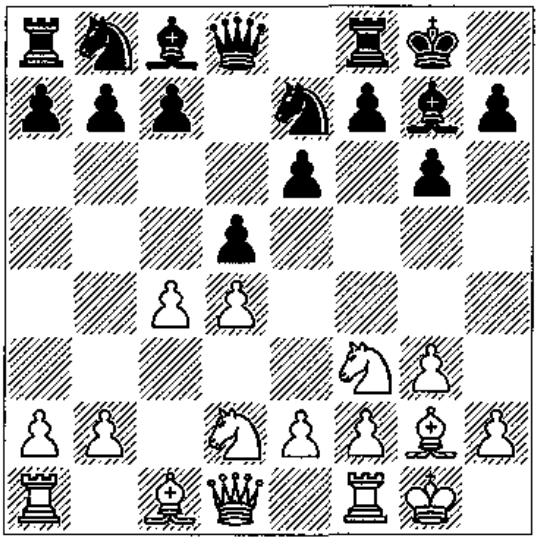


Kosten-Goldin, Paris 1994. Now 12 ♗b2 is clearly to White's advantage: he has the centre, a powerful dark-squared bishop, and pressure on the queenside.

c) 3...g6!? (quite a trendy line; Black plays actively, but will block his c-pawn) 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 0-0 ♘e7 6 d4 0-0 (6...♘bc6 7 e3 0-0 8 ♘bd2 amounts to the same) 7 ♘bd2 *(D)*.

I like this move, defending c4, more than capturing on d5, which allows the

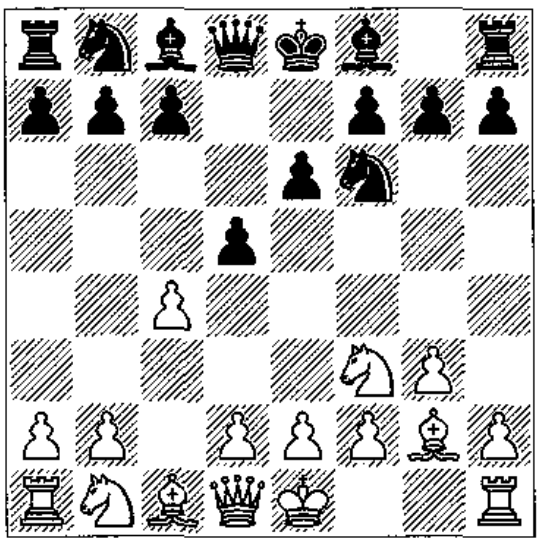
B



black queen's bishop to take up an active position, outside the pawn-chain. 7...♘bc6 8 e3 (defending d4; White will follow up with b3 and ♗b2, controlling e5, with a small, but sure, advantage) 8...a5 (8...♖e8 9 ♖b1 a5 and now 10 a3 a4 11 ♕c2 ♗d7 12 ♖d1 ♖c8 13 b4 axb3 14 ♘xb3 b6 15 ♗b2 ♖a8 was a little better for White in Kamsky-Khenkin, USSR 1988, but 10 b3 may be even simpler; after 8...b6 9 ♖b1 a5 10 b3 ♗a6 11 ♗b2 ♖c8 12 ♗a1 b5 13 cxd5 exd5 14 ♗h3 ♖a8 15 ♖c1, Nogueiras-Arencibia, Cienfuegos Capablanca mem 1991, the c-file is very sensitive – in particular c5) 9 b3 e5!? (9...b6 10 ♗b2 ♗b7 11 a3 ♕d7 12 ♕c2 f5 13 ♖ac1 ♖ac8 14 ♖fd1 h6 15 ♗c3 ♕e8 16 b4 and White expands aggressively on the queenside, Korchnoi-Short, Skellefteå 1989) 10 ♗a3 exd4 11 cxd5 ♘b4 (11...dxe3 12 dxc6 ♗xa1 13 ♕xa1 exd2 14 ♘xd2 bxc6 15 ♘e4 decimates Black on the dark squares) 12 ♘xd4 ♘exd5 13 ♖c1 ♖e8 14 ♕f3 c6 15 ♘c4 ♘xa2 16 ♘d6 ♖f8 17 ♖xc6! bxc6 18 ♘xc6 and in this

exciting position the players agreed a draw in the game Draško-Khenkin, Tilburg 1994. This was a pity, as White is certainly better.

4 ♘f3 *(D)*

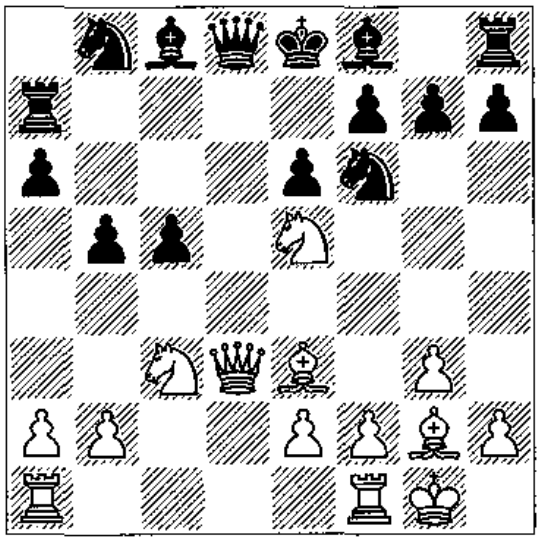


4...♗e7

4...c5 5 cxd5 brings us, not for the first time, to Chapter 10, while 4...c6 5 0-0 dxc4 transposes to note 'b' to Black's 3rd move.

4...d4 can be met by 5 b4!? with the point 5...♗xb4!? 6 ♕a4+ ♘c6 7 ♘e5 ♖b8! 8 ♘xc6 bxc6 9 ♗xc6+ with a slight edge, but White can also play a Benoni or Benko set-up, with a tempo (or two) more.

Otherwise, 4...dxc4 5 0-0!? (5 ♕a4+ is the main move here, and occurs rather often, but rather than turn this book into one on all the Flank Openings, and the Queen's Gambit, etc., I have decided to concentrate on a little-known, 'untheoretical' continuation, which nevertheless offers White good play) 5...a6 (5...♘bd7 6 ♘a3 ♗xa3 7 bxa3 transposes to the note to move three; 5...c5?! is inaccurate, as White can play 6 ♘a3 and ♘xc4, with advantage) 6 ♘c3!? (aiming for positional pressure for the pawn sacrificed) 6...b5 (6...♗e7 7 b3 cxb3 8 ♕xb3 0-0 9 d4 followed by the moves e4, ♗f4, etc.) 7 d3! cxd3 8 ♘e5 ♖a7 9 ♗e3 c5 10 ♕xd3 *(D)*.



At the price of one pawn, White has a large lead in development – four minor pieces in action compared to one of Black's. By classical standards this is quite sufficient. 10...♕c7?! (this is too risky, but if 10...♕xd3 then 11 ♘xd3 ♘bd7 12 a4 b4 13 ♘e4 ♘xe4 14 ♗xe4 ♗b7 15 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 16 ♖ac1 regains the pawn with advantage) 11 ♖fd1 ♗e7 12 a4! (White breaks up the queenside pawns, taking advantage of the fact that the capture of the e5-knight can be answered by the skewer ♗f4) 12...0-0 (12...b4 13 ♘e4 ♘xe4 14 ♗xe4 f5 15 ♗f3 0-0 16 ♘c4 grants White plenty of positional compensation) 13 axb5 ♕xe5 14 ♗f4 ♕h5 15 ♗xb8 ♖d7 16 ♕c4 axb5 17 ♕xb5

♕g6 18 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 19 ♕b7! ♕c2 20 ♗e5 (suddenly it becomes apparent that Black is lost: he has no squares for his d7-bishop...) 20...♖d8 21 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 22 ♗e4 (...or his queen!) 22...♗c8 23 ♕b5 ♕d2 24 ♖d1 is winning for White, Kuzmin-Beliavsky, Kiev 1978.

5 0-0 0-0 6 ♕c2

6 d4 is another line in the Catalan, although by playing this particular move-order, White has cut down on some of Black's possibilities. 6 b3 is the main line in this variation of the Réti.

6...c5

The best move; alternatives:

a) 6...b6 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♘c3 ♗b7 9 d4 ♘xc3 10 bxc3 ♘d7?! 11 ♘g5 ♗xg5 12 ♗xb7 ♖b8 13 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 14 ♗c6 with control of the queenside light squares, Larsen-Letzelter, Monte Carlo 1968.

b) 6...d4 7 d3 c5 8 e4 dxe3 9 fxe3 ♘c6 10 a3 ♖b8 11 ♘c3 b6 12 ♖d1 ♗b7 13 d4 ♘d7 14 b3 h6 15 ♗b2 cxd4 16 exd4 ♘a5 17 d5 ♕c8 18 ♘d4 with an enormous advantage for White, Smyslov-Forintos, Polanica Zdroj 1968.

c) 6...♘bd7 7 b3 c6 8 ♗b2 a5 9 ♘c3 b6 10 d3 ♗b7 11 e4 dxc4 12 dxc4 e5 13 ♘h4 with an edge, Smyslov-Kurajica, Skopje 1969.

d) 6...dxc4 7 ♘a3! c5 8 ♘xc4 ♘c6 9 b3 ♗d7 10 ♗b2 ♖c8 11 ♖ac1 ♕c7 12 ♘ce5 h6 13 d4 ♘b4 14 ♕b1 ♗b5 15 a3 ♘bd5 16 dxc5 ♗xe2 17 ♖fe1 ♗xf3 18 ♗xf3 ♕d8 19 b4 and with the bishop-pair, and a mobile queenside majority, White is certainly favourite, Smyslov-Krogius, USSR Ch (Tbilisi) 1966/7.

7 d4 cxd4 8 ♘xd4 ♘c6

8...♘a6?! 9 cxd5 ♘xd5 10 ♖d1 ♘db4 11 ♕b3 ♕b6 12 ♗e3 ♘c5 13 ♕c4 ♘d5 was met by 14 ♘f5! exf5 15 ♗xd5 with a dominating position for White in Kurajica-Groszpeter, Oberwart 1984.

8...e5 9 ♘f5 ♗xf5?! (9...dxc4 10 ♘d2 ♘c6 11 ♘xc4 is only slightly superior for White, Conquest-Kosten, Ostend 1987) 10 ♕xf5 ♘c6 11 cxd5 ♘xd5 12 ♘c3 ♘xc3 13 bxc3 ♕c7 14 ♖b1 ♖ad8 15 ♗e3 and Black is in a bad way, Smyslov-Peretz, Lugano OL 1968.

9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 ♖d1 a5

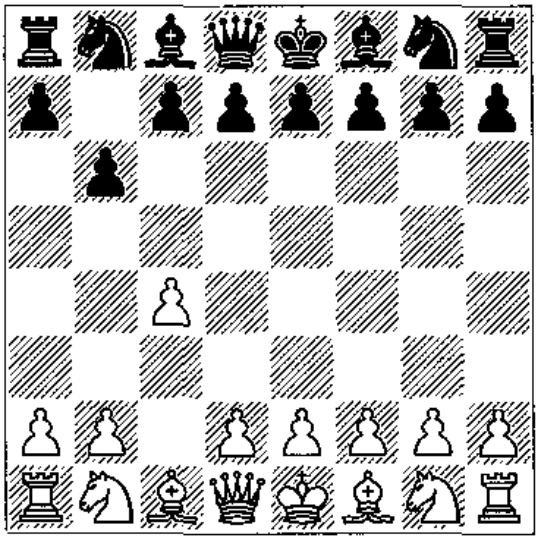
10...♗c5 11 e3 ♕e7 12 b3 ♖d8 13 ♘c3 ♗b7 14 ♗b2 e5 15 ♖ac1 ♗b4 16 ♘a4 ♗d6 17 ♗c3 h5 18 ♕f5 ♗c8 19 ♕g5 ♗g4 20 f3 ♗d7 21 f4 ♘g4 22 ♕xe7 ♗xe7 23 cxd5 cxd5 24 ♗xd5 leaves White a pawn up, Vaganian-Beliavsky, Tilburg 1993.

11 ♘c3 ♗a6 12 b3 ♕b6 13 ♘a4 ♕b7 14 ♖b1 ♖fd8 15 ♗d2 ♗b4 16 ♗g5 ♗e7 17 e4! dxe4 18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19 ♕xe4

The c6-pawn is doomed, Vaganian-Dokhoian, Tilburg 1994.

16 The English Defence: 1...b6

1 c4 b6 *(D)*



This move (the English Defence – quite an appropriate response to 1 c4, really) is perhaps a little dubious, but does appeal to those freer spirits amongst us, such as Speelman and Plaskett in England, and Bricard in France, for instance. Black avoids the main highways of theory and often reaches unusual positions. A specialist on this opening once told me that it was almost playable against the English, but more dubious against 1 d4, as, in that case, 1...b6 could be met by 2 e4.

2 ♘c3

As in many lines of the English (Opening), White has the possibility of transposing into various standard main lines, if he so desires, by the simple expedient of playing an early d4. For instance, 2 d4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 transposes to the Queen's Indian, whilst 3...f5 would be a variation of the Dutch, or Nimzo-Indian should White play ♘c3, and Black ...♗b4.

2...♗b7 3 e4

Once again, 3 d4 e6 4 a3 ♘f6 5 ♘f3 is a main-line 4 a3 Queen's Indian. However, if none of these openings fit in with your repertoire, I suggest adopting a purely English approach, and playing a Botvinnik set-up, as the placement of White's central pawns on light squares will close the h1-a8 diagonal, and scotch the b7-bishop.

3...c5

This allows Black to play a sort of 'Hedgehog set-up'. Instead, after 3...e6, 4 ♘ge2 (4 d4 ♗b4 5 f3 {5 ♗d3} 5...f5 brings us to one of the sharp main lines of the English Defence, but why bother?) is a good move, taking the sting out of ...♗b4, which can now be strongly answered by a3. Then:

a) 4...c5 5 g3 will transpose back to the main line.

b) 4...g6 5 d4 ♗g7, Panno-Garcia Palermo, La Plata 1997, leaves Black in an extremely silly King's Indian position. White's simplest plan is probably to play 'Sämisch-style': ♗e3, f3, and ♕d2, with a powerful position.

c) 4...♘f6 5 d3 d5 (5...c5 transposes to the main line again) 6 e5 ♘fd7 7 cxd5 exd5 8 d4 should be good for White.

d) 4...f5 is certainly appropriate for this line, and, in the game Miezis-Ward, Port Erin 1998, things rapidly got out of hand: 5 exf5 exf5 6 d4 ♘f6 7 ♕d3 ♗e4 8 ♕d2 ♗b4 9 a3 ♗xc3 10 ♘xc3 ♕e7 11 ♔d1 0-0 12 f3 ♗b7 13 ♗d3 ♘c6 14 ♖e1 ♕f7 15 d5 ♘d4 16 ♕f4 ♘b3 17 ♖b1 with a position that is difficult to assess (for me, at any rate), but 7 ♘f4 and ♗d3, for instance, is a possibility, or the solid 5 d3, intending to fianchetto the king's bishop, e.g. 5...fxe4 6 dxe4 ♘f6 7 ♘f4!?.

4 g3 e6

Or 4...g6 5 ♘ge2 ♗g7 6 ♗g2 (6 d4 is possible, of course, if you are happy playing this type of position) 6...♘c6 7 0-0 e6?! (7...d6 is stronger, but after 8 d3 ♕d7 9 ♗e3 ♘f6 10 h3 0-0 11 ♕d2 ♘e8, Balduzzi-Larsen, Mar del Plata 1995, 12 d4 would maintain White's plus) 8 d4! cxd4 9 ♘b5 d6 10 ♘exd4 ♘xd4 11 ♘xd4 ♘e7 12 ♕a4+ ♕d7 13 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 14 ♖d1 a6 15 ♗e3 ♖hc8 16 ♖ac1, and the placing of the black king is far from ideal, Uhlmann-Danailov, Halle 1984.

5 ♗g2 ♘f6 6 ♘ge2 d6

Following 6...♕c7 7 d3 a6 8 0-0 d6, White decided to play on the queenside as well, and gained a great advantage after 9 a3 ♗e7 10 b4 0-0 11 ♖b1 ♘c6 12 b5 axb5 13 ♘xb5 ♕d8 14 f4 d5 15 cxd5 exd5 16 e5 ♘e8 17 ♘ec3 d4 18 ♘e4 ♔h8 19 g4 ♕d7 20 g5 in Miezis-Kulaots, Biel 1995, but 9 f4, and h3, g4, etc., is, once again, quite playable.

7 0-0 ♘bd7

7...♘c6 can be met by 8 d3 followed by f4, h3, g4 and ♘g3, with similar play, or by 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 as the black queen's knight is not ideally placed on c6 (d7 is better).

8 d3

This is White's plan: rather than play d4, and transpose into an, albeit favourable, Hedgehog structure, White solidifies his centre and plays for a kingside pawn-storm.

8...a6 9 f4 g6

Moving the bishop to an alternative spot. 9...♗e7 is also possible, when, in a rapid game of mine, I simply continued h3, g4 and ♘g3, then g5, and, while my opponent played all the 'normal' Hedgehog moves, I simply mated him on the kingside!

10 h3 h5?!

Black is, rightly, worried about g4, but this weakens g5.

11 f5! e5 12 fxg6 fxg6 13 ♘d5 ♘xd5?

A mistake, conveniently presenting White with the e4-square.

14 exd5 ♕e7 15 ♘c3 0-0-0 16 ♘e4 ♗h6?

This loses immediately, but Black's position was already beyond saving, for if 16...♖e8, then 17 ♗g5 ♕h7 18 h4, and ♗h3 is crushing.

17 ♗xh6 ♖xh6 18 ♖f7!

Brutally winning the queen. 1-0 Williams-Cherniaev, Hastings 1998/9.

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1: The Botvinnik System: 2...♘c6 and 3...g6
1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘c6 3 ♗g2 g6 4 ♘c3 ♗g7 5 e4 d6 6 ♘ge2 *18*
A: 6...♘ge7 *18*
B: 6...f5 *22*
C: 6...♗e6 *25*
D: 6...♘d4 *26*
E: 6...h5 *27*
F: 6...♘f6 *28*

2: Grand Prix Attack Reversed: 2...♘c6 and 3...f5
1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘c6 3 ♗g2 f5 4 ♘c3 ♘f6 5 d3 *32*
A: 5...♗c5 *32*
B: 5...♗b4 *35*

3: Three Knights System: 4...♗c5
1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 ♘c6 4 ♘c3 ♗c5 5 a3 *39*

4: Three Knights System: 4...♗b4
1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 ♘c6 4 ♘c3 ♗b4 5 ♘d5 *43*

5: Dragon Reversed: 2...♘f6 and 3...d5
1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 ♘f3 ♘c6 6 0-0 *46*
A: 6...♘b6 *46*
B: 6...♗e7 and others *50*

6: The Keres System: 2...♘f6 and 3...c6
1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 c6 4 d4 *53*
A: **4...exd4** *53* **5 ♕xd4 d5 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 ♘f3 ♘c6 8 ♕a4** *54*
A1: 8...♗e7 *54*
A2: 8...♗c5 *56*
A3: 8...♗b4+ *57*
B: **4...♗b4+** *57*
C: **4...d6** *58*
D: **4...e4** *59*

7: Other Second Moves for Black
1 c4 e5 2 g3 *60*
A: **2...c6** *60* **3 d4** *60*
A1: 3...exd4 *60*
A2: 3...♗b4+ *60*
A3: 3...d6 *61*

A4: 3...e4 *61*
B: **2...g6** *62*
C: **2...f5** *62* **3 ♗g2 ♘f6 4 d4** *62*
C1: 4...exd4 *63*
C2: 4...e4 *64*
C3: 4...♗b4+ *65*
C4: 4...d6 *65*
D: **2...d5** *66*
E: **2...d6** *67*

8: The Symmetrical Variation: ...g6 and ...♘c6
1 c4 c5 2 g3 g6 3 ♗g2 ♗g7 4 ♘c3 ♘c6 5 a3 *76*
A: **5...a6** *76* **6 ♖b1 ♖b8 7 b4 cxb4 8 axb4 b5 9 cxb5 axb5 10 ♘f3** *77*
A1: 10...d5 *77*
A2: 10...e5 *78*
A3: 10...♘f6 *80*
A4: 10...♘h6 *81*
B: **5...e6** *81*
C: **5...e5** *83*
D: **5...a5** *85* **6 ♘f3** *85*
D1: 6...d6 *85*
D2: 6...e5 *86*
D3: 6...e6 *87*
D4: 6...♘f6 *88*
E: **5...d6** *88*
F: **5...♘f6** *90*
G: **5...b6** *92*
H: **5...♘h6** *92*

9: The Rubinstein Variation: 2...♘f6 and 3...d5
1 c4 c5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 ♘c3 *94* **5...♘c7** (5...♘xc3 *94*) **6 ♘f3 ♘c6 7 0-0** *95* **7...e5 8 ♘e1** *96* **8...♗d7 9 ♘d3** *99*

10: The Keres-Parma Variation: ...e6 and ...d5
1 c4 c5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 e6 4 ♘f3 d5 5 cxd5 *101* **5...♘xd5 6 0-0 ♘c6 7 ♘c3 ♗e7 8 ♘xd5 exd5 9 d4 0-0 10 dxc5 ♗xc5 11 ♗g5** *104*
A: 11...f6 *104*
B: 11...♕b6 *106*
C: 11...♗e7 *107*
D: 11...♕d7 *107*

11: The Pseudo-Grünfeld System: 1...♘f6 and 2...d5
1 c4 ♘f6 2 g3 d5 3 cxd5 ♘xd5 4 ♗g2 g6 5 ♘c3 *110*
A: 5...♘xc3 *110*
B: 5...♘b6 *112*

12: The Dutch: 1...f5
1 c4 f5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 *116*
A: **3...e6** *116* **4 ♘f3** *117*
A1: 4...d5 *117*
A2: 4...♗e7 *119*
B: **3...g6** *120*

13: 1...g6
1 c4 g6 2 g3 ♗g7 3 ♗g2 *124*
A: 3...e5 *124*
B: 3...♘f6 *128*

14: 1...c6
1 c4 c6 *132* **2 g3 d5 3 ♗g2 ♘f6 4 ♘f3** *133*
A: 4...♗g4 *133*
B: 4...♗f5 *134*
C: 4...dxc4 *135*
D: 4...g6 *136*

15: 1...e6
1 c4 e6 2 g3 d5 3 ♗g2 *137*

16: The English Defence: 1...b6
1 c4 b6 2 ♘c3 ♗b7 3 e4 *141*